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BEYOND TIME THE AGELESS MUSIC OF JAGJIT SINGH

HABITAT A·R·T·S

BEYOND TIME

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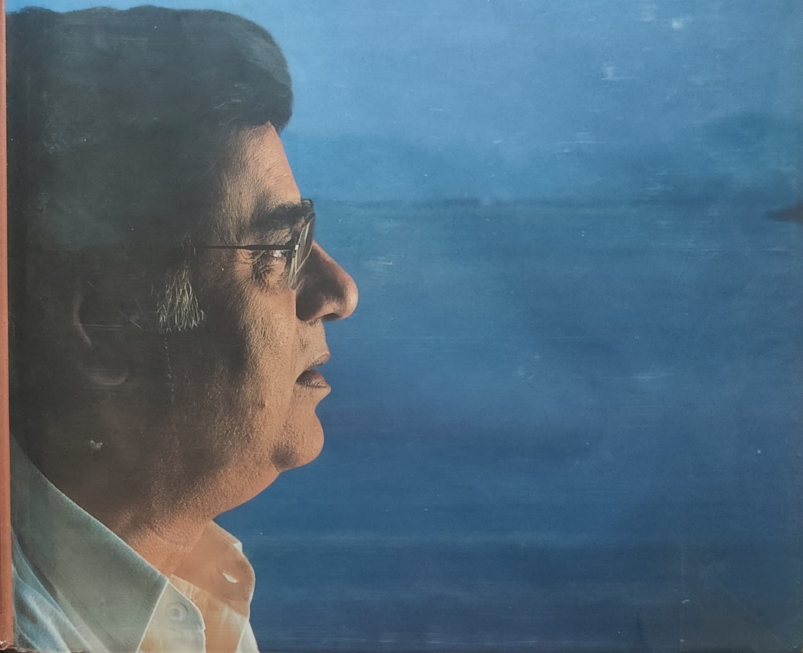

Vighnesh ★★
Shirdhonkar
19th Jan 2022

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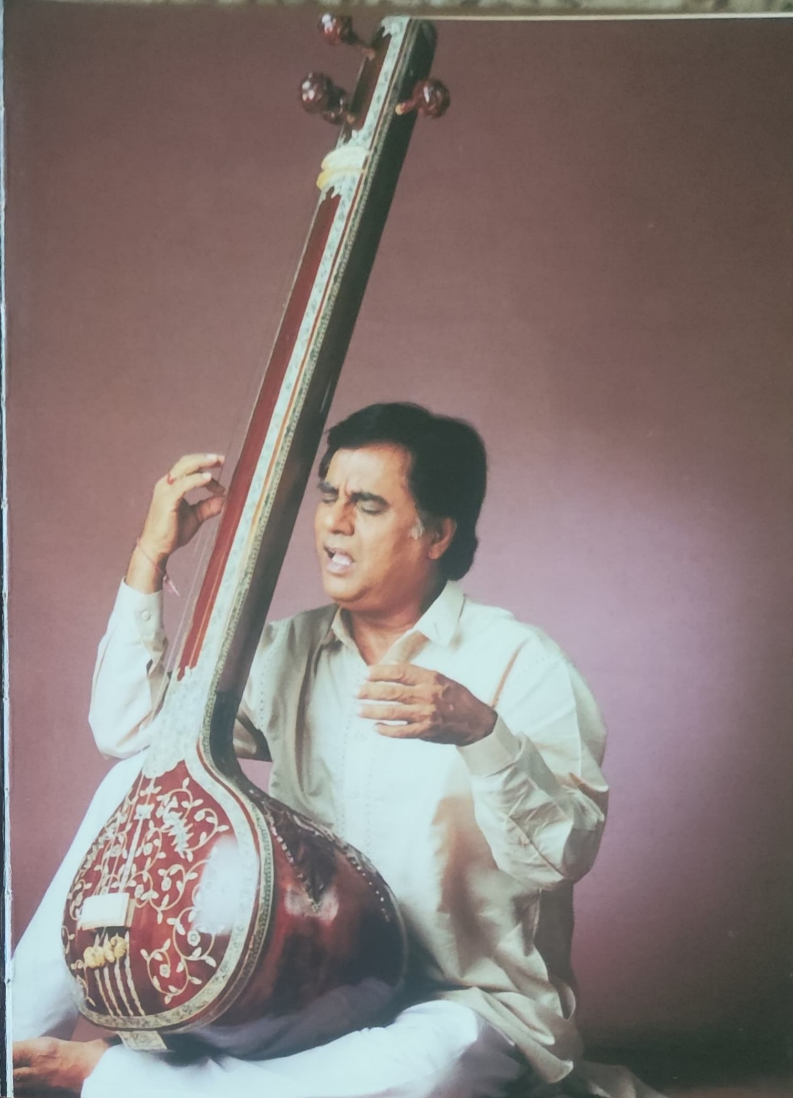

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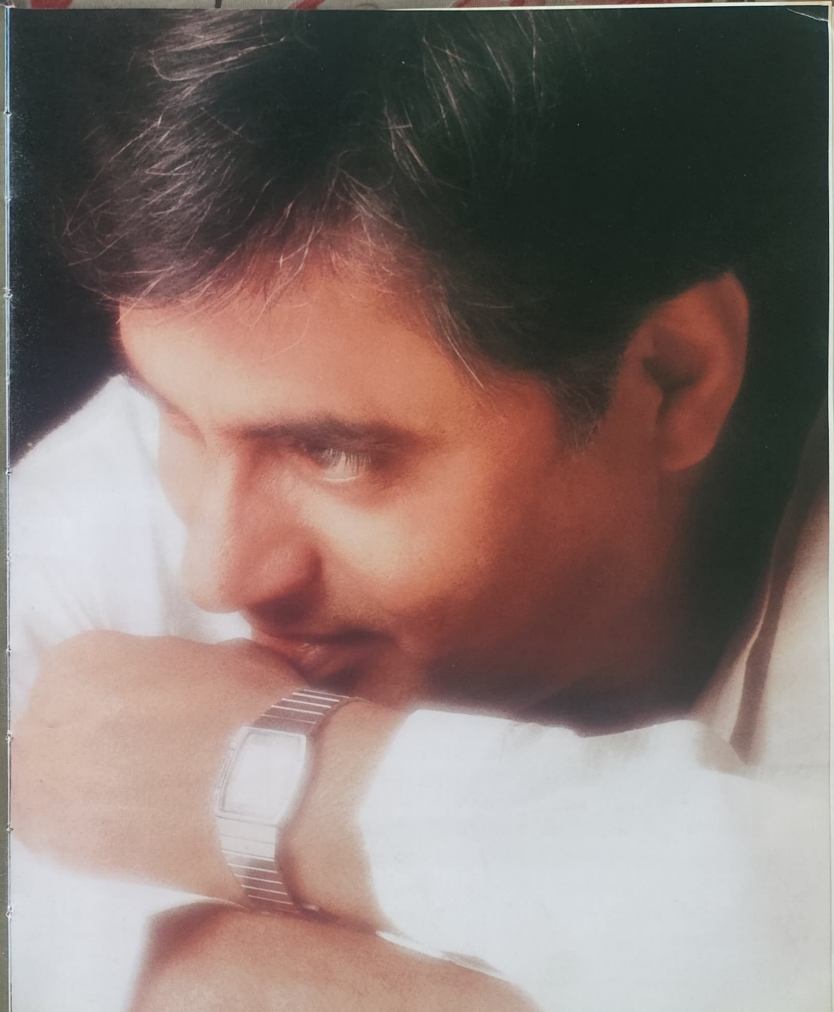

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FOREWORD

THE WORLD OF MUSIC WOULD NOT BE COMPLETE WITHOUT GHAZALS. THE WORLD OF GHAZALS WOULD NOT BE COMPLETE WITHOUT JAGJIT SINGH. JAGJIT SINGH'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE WORLD OF MUSIC IS UNIQUE.

I HAVE HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF SINGING VARIOUS GHAZALS IN FILMS UNDER THE BATON OF GREAT FILM COMPOSERS. WHILE SOME OF THESE STALWARTS PASSED AWAY IN THE MID SEVENTIES, AT THE SAME TIME, THE GHAZAL WAS FAST BECOMING REDUNDANT IN THE KIND OF FILMS MADE IN THOSE DAYS.

I WOULD YEARN TO HEAR, IF NOT SING, A GHAZAL IN FILMS, BUT THAT DID NOT HAPPEN TOO OFTEN AND MADE ME WONDER WHETHER THIS BEAUTIFUL FORM OF POETRY WOULD NOW BE A FORGOTTEN ART.

BUT THEN JAGJIT SINGH ARRIVED ON THE SCENE AND HAS KEPT THE GHAZAL FLYING HIGH TILL TODAY.

HIS CONTRIBUTION BECOMES ALL THE MORE SIGNIFICANT, BECAUSE, AT A TIME WHEN MELODY WAS GOING AWAY FROM OUR FILM MUSIC, HIS COMPOSITIONS AND SINGING STYLE GAVE US RENEWED HOPE. EVEN MORE SO, THE SWAY OF HINDI CINEMA AND ITS SITUATIONAL SONGS WAS SO STRONG THAT THE NEW ARENA OF NON-FILM MUSIC, CREATED BY HIM, BROUGHT A COMPLETE FRESHNESS TO THE MUSIC SCENE.

THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO DOUBT THAT JAGJIT SINGH WITH HIS UNIQUE COMPOSING AND SINGING STYLE IS THE TORCHBEARER OF THE SURVIVAL OF GHAZALS IN INDIA.

I RECALL HAVING HEARD ABOUT HIS TALENT FROM VARIOUS PEOPLE INCLUDING THE LATE MADAN MOHAN. I ALSO RECALL THAT ON MADAN BHAIYYA'S ANNIVERSARY, I HAD SUGGESTED JAGJIT SINGH'S NAME TO PERFORM ON THE OCCASION AND HE REGALED THE AUDIENCE WITH HIS SCINTILLATING RENDITIONS.

THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK TOGETHER CAME ONLY IN THE EARLY NINETIES. I SANG A SONG IN THE FILM 'KANOON KI AAWAZ' UNDER HIS BATON – IT WAS A SIMPLE SWEET TUNE – A SONG FOR KARVA CHAUTH. I WONDER IF THE FILM WAS EVER RELEASED. I ALSO RECALL SINGING WITH HIM FOR THE FILM 'NARGIS' AND SOME OTHERS. BUT OF COURSE, THE ALBUM 'SAJDA' WAS WORTH ITS WAIT.

I HAVE MANY MEMORIES OF 'SAJDA.' MOST OF ALL, MY ILL HEALTH DURING THOSE DAYS. BUT JAGJIT SINGH PERSEVERED AND ALWAYS MADE ME FEEL COMFORTABLE AND SPECIAL. EVEN ON DAYS WHEN I FELT THAT MY HEALTH WAS NOT UP TO ITS MARK, HE WOULD CAJOLE ME AND MAKE ME BELIEVE THAT HE WAS SATISFIED WITH MY RENDITION. 'SAJDA' TOOK A WHILE TO COMPLETE BUT THE ENTHUSIASM OF BOTH JAGJIT SINGH'S FANS AND MINE MADE ME FEEL THAT IT WAS A WORTHWHILE EFFORT. IN FACT, 'SAJDA' IS A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT 'OFFERING' IN MY REPERTOIRE OF ALBUMS. I AM GLAD THAT IT ALSO FORMS A PRIDE OF PLACE IN JAGJIT SINGH'S COLLECTION.

THERE WERE MANY REQUESTS TO DO A FOLLOW-UP TO 'SAJDA' BUT I THINK SOMEWHERE JAGJIT SINGH AND I BOTH FELT THAT IT SHOULD REMAIN A SINGULAR EXPERIENCE!

DURING THE MAKING OF 'SAJDA' I GOT TO KNOW JAGJIT SINGH, THE PERSON, BETTER – A GREAT COMPOSER AND SINGER OF COURSE, AND A VERY WARM HUMAN BEING WITH A GREAT SENSE OF HUMOUR.

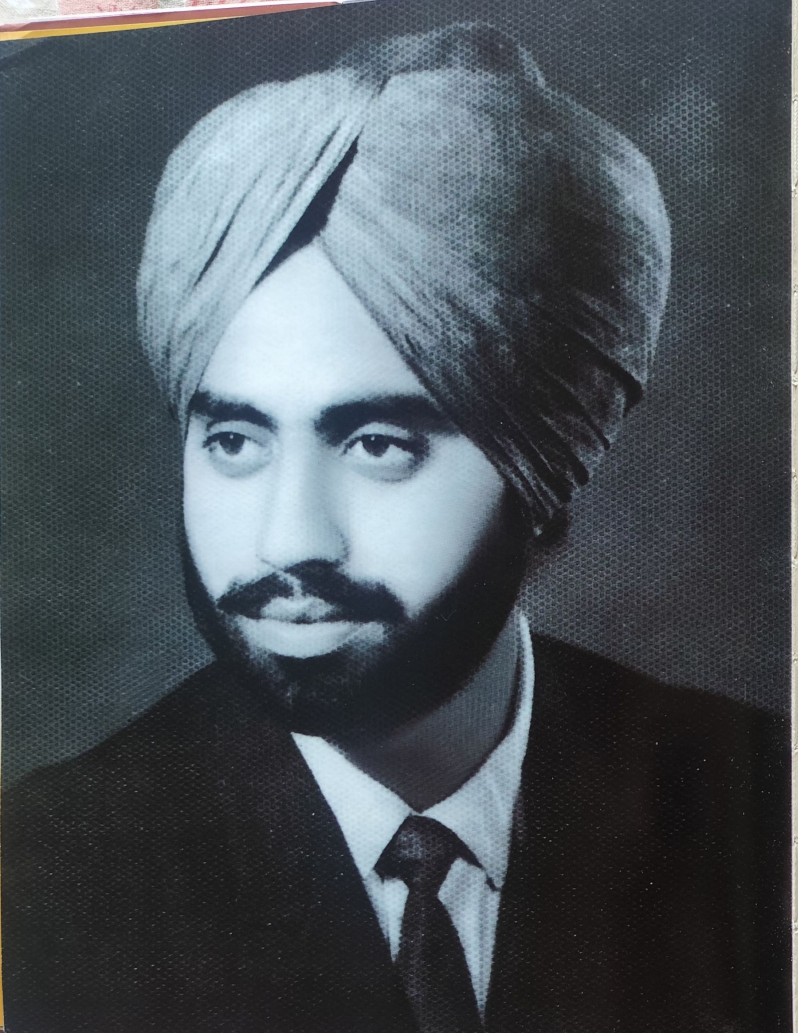
THE PERSONAL TRAGEDY THAT BEFELL JAGJIT AND CHITRA WAS DEVASTATING. BUT IT WAS THE ARTISTE IN JAGJIT SINGH THAT SURMOUNTED THIS PAIN – IN FACT I COULD FEEL HIS LATENT ANGUISH DURING THE MAKING OF 'SAJDA', ALL OF WHICH CAME OUT IN HIS COMPOSITIONS FOR THE ALBUM AND MAYBE SOMEWHERE IN MY RENDITION AS WELL. INDEED, TOGETHER WE SANG AND CREATED THIS 'GHAM KA KHAZANA'.

HIS DEDICATION TO HIS MUSIC REMAINED SOLID. IT WAS ALMOST AS IF HIS WORSHIP OF MUSIC WAS BEING ADDRESSED IN THE FIRST GHAZAL I SANG FOR 'SAJDA' – 'DIL MEIN AB DARD-E-MOHABBAT KE SIWA KUCH BHI NAHIN, ZINDAGI MERI IBADAT KE SIWA KUCH BHI NAHIN'.

I AM GLAD THAT THIS BOOK WILL CHRONICLE JAGJIT SINGH'S MUSICAL JOURNEY AND ELUCIDATE HIS DEVOTION TO MUSIC. HIS FANS WILL FIND THIS BOOK A MOST INTERESTING EXPERIENCE.

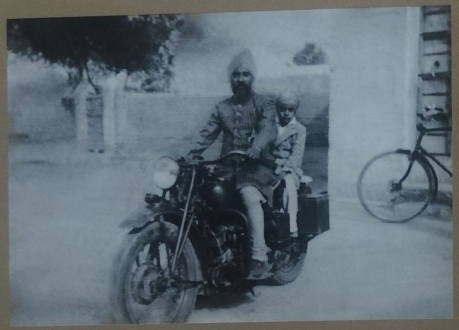
I WISH JAGJIT SINGH A LONG INNINGS; TO REMAIN AT THE PINNACLE OF ONE'S FIELD FOR A LONG AND UNINTERRUPTED PERIOD OF TIME IS A MONUMENTAL TASK. BUT HE HAS STRIVEN FOR THIS POSITION AND I WISH HIM ALL THE BEST TO BE ABLE TO RETAIN IT.

LATA MANGESHKAR

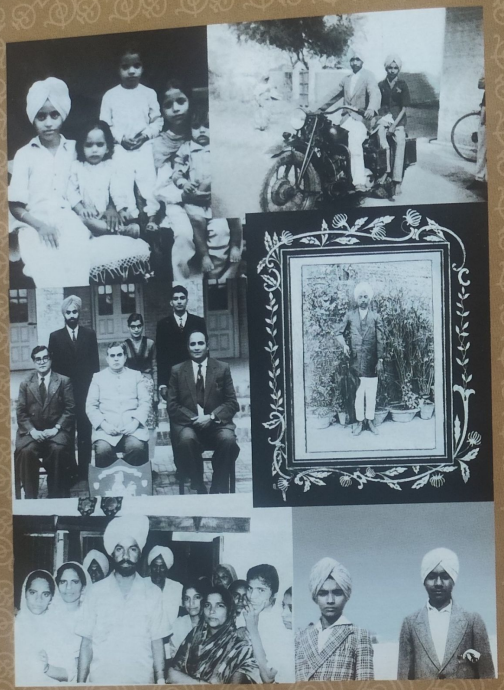


FAMILY ALBUM

1941-1965



JAGJIT SINGH | ALTHOUGH I WAS BORN IN SRIGANGANAGAR, MY FATHER WAS POSTED TO BIKANER WHEN I WAS ONE YEAR OLD, SO MY EARLIEST MEMORIES ARE FROM THERE. WE WERE A LOWER MIDDLE CLASS FAMILY, NOT AT ALL WELL OFF. DURING THE KITE SEASON, BUYING KITES WAS A LUXURY, SO WE'D LOOK FOR THOSE THAT WERE CUT DOWN AND RETRIEVE THEM WITH A POLE SO THAT WE COULD FLY THEM. RADIOS TOO WERE A LUXURY THAT NOT EVERYONE COULD AFFORD. WORLD WAR II WAS GOING ON THEN, AND I REMEMBER GOING FOR WALKS WITH MY FATHER TO THE PARK SO THAT WE COULD HEAR THE NEWS ON THE RADIO FROM A NEARBY HOUSE.



KARTAR SINGH, *younger brother* | When Jagjit (Veerji as I call him) was born, he was actually named Jagmohan. But when he was very little, our Namdhari Guruji made my father change it to Jagjit. Because, as he predicted, *yeh jag ko jeetega*, he'll conquer the world. And he has lived up to his name.

My father, Baji we used to call him, was a very devout Sikh. He was actually born a Hindu and his name was Amin Chand, but he was attracted to the teachings of Sikhism and converted when he was 16-17 years old, taking the name Amar Singh. As a follower of the Namdhari sect, he was a strict vegetarian; that is how we too were brought up.

Father was a totally self-made man, an only child who came from a very poor family. He had to work very hard, and joined evening classes to complete his matriculation. Afterwards, he worked in the Public Works Department, where he got a permanent job.

My mother, Beeji, was a simple housewife. Like the women of her generation, her husband's word was law. She, too, was very devout and immersed in her daily prayers. The most important thing for her was the welfare of her husband and children; she worked very hard to care for us, cooking food, stitching clothes and washing and pressing them.

This, despite the fact that she came from a better-off family than my father's. The story of how their marriage was arranged is quite fascinating. My maternal grandfather and father happened to be travelling by train together. They struck up a conversation during the course of which particulars were exchanged. My grandfather liked the young man he saw, and thought that he would be a suitable match for his daughter; a promising boy, he thought, with some education.

My father was a generous man and never turned anyone away, even if there was not too much in the house. He always used to say, Help people as much as you can – perhaps because he had seen such hard times and knew what the struggle for money was about.

Father used to say that things improved after Veerji was born. So you could say that his birth was lucky for the whole family.

JAGJIT SINGH | Although I was born in Sriganganagar, my father was posted to Bikaner when I was one year old, so my earliest memories are from there. We were a lower middle class family, not at all well off. My mother had 11 children, of whom seven survived. During the kite season, buying kites was a luxury, so we'd look for those that were cut down and retrieve them with a pole so that we could fly them. Radios too were a luxury that not everyone could afford. World War II was going on then, and I remember going for walks with my father to the park so that we could hear the news on the radio from a nearby house.

I went to an Urdu medium primary school where we all sat on the floor and learnt alif, bey, and so on. Our homework was on slates called takhtis, which had to be coated so that we could inscribe them with the kalams or pens that we whittled from bamboo, like calligraphy pens. We used to study by the light of lanterns because there was no electricity in the house.

Every year there would be great excitement during the festival of Gangaur, when the Maharaja would ride through the city on his elephant. And I remember going to the Ganga theatre, an air-cooled hall, where my father took us to see a film when I was very young.

Bikaner was also the scene of a family tragedy. An aunt of mine had come and together with our neighbours we set off in a truck to Kolayatji, a place of pilgrimage. Along the way, we had an accident: the

truck overturned, and the next thing I knew was that I was in hospital. My aunt broke both her legs; my younger brother, Sukhdev, died on the spot. Had he survived, he would have been next in age to me.

In 1948 we went back to Sriganganagar, where I now went to the Khalsa school in the gurdwara compound. By this time, we had a radio in the house, and I used to listen to film songs. In those days every film was a hit with good music, so I would hum or sing the songs. I suppose my father heard something in my voice, some quality, because he made me learn music with a blind teacher, Pandit Chhaganlal Sharma, who taught me the basic scales and made me practise them. I suppose I must have been about 12 years old then. Later, I had another teacher for advanced music, Ustad Jamal Khan saheb. Khan saheb taught me ragas, and several bandishes in thumris and khayals.

KARTAR SINGH, *younger brother* | Father was fond of music. In the Sikh religion, music has a very high place, our Gurbani is set to ragas. My father did not have the luxury of learning music himself, his life was too hard for that, but he made it a point that at least one of his children learned. He wanted that some one child of his should learn well, in classical style, not as a profession but as a gift.

JAGJIT SINGH | But my life was not all about music. By this time, my older brother had gone away to college, so it was now my duty to help in household chores. We had no running water; like the mythological Shravan Kumar, I balanced a pole with two buckets, and used to make several trips to fill water from the canal or tank nearby. We always had a cow or buffalo in the yard outside the house, so fodder had to be brought and mixed and the animals fed. I used to be sent out to buy vegetables. So Yasin, Ustadji's son, and I would set off to do the shopping. Somehow from the money I got, I would squeeze out two-three annas and buy chhole-bread from the bazaar, which I loved to eat, or gulab jamuns. If by some chance we bumped into Ustadji, that was the end of the chhole, for he'd take the money from us for a tipple.

Ustad Jamal Khan was from the Senia gharana, and said to be a descendant of Tansen. The first raga he taught me was Bageshwari. He taught me some wonderful bandishes, including a dhrupad in Raga Malkauns and one in Bilaskhani Todi. I didn't realise then how valuable this was.

BE THE LORD OF MY DESTINY,
DOUBTLESSLY SO,
BUT WHAT'S IN MY DESTINY,
TELL ME THAT AT LEAST.

Poet: Rana Sahri | Album: A Sound Affair, 1985

My musical education in Sriganganagar continued in many ways. There was the radio, of course, for both classical music and film songs. An organisation called Sangeet Kala Mandir had concerts, sometimes with outside artistes, and I recall hearing Pandit Maniram and his brother Pandit Jasraj at one of these. Such occasions were an exposure for me as to what music is. In those days it was the custom to sing shabads to the tunes of film songs in the gurdwara or in the processions that used to take place on the birthdays of Guru Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh and Guru Arjun Dev. Each of the trucks that formed the processions had a musician to sing, and sometimes I would be the singer. The last festival happens in the hot days of summer, so there would be tents (piaos) where water would be poured for thirsty passers-by; that is considered a service, and I too would sit there giving water.

My very first public success came when I was in the 9th class, during Guruparb when it was the custom to have a Kavi Darbar each year where poets would recite their work, poems based on the themes of the Gurus or on some burning topic of the day. We used to get a magazine at home called Satyug, a Namdhari magazine, in which I saw a geet that I liked so much, I copied it, "Ki tera aitbaar o rahiya". I don't know why I liked it so much, but from that time I had a taste for such lyrics, even in film songs, lyrics with the melancholy flavour of parting and separation. As part of the Darbar, I was invited to sing as a local artiste, and this was the geet I chose. I had composed the tune myself and set it in Raga Bhairavi.

As many as 15-20 artistes were on the stage that night, including top people of Punjab like singers Asa Singh Mastana, Parkash Kaur, Surinder Kaur and the poet, Inderjit Singh Tulsi. When I sang there was great excitement! The public showered me with money – that was the sign of appreciation then – some gave me five rupees, some two, and called out their encouragement. So much so that when the song ended, they made me sing another, and I sang "O duniya ke rakhwale" which was a great hit in those days. The response was a great boost for me, and encouraged me to go further with my music.

After that, there was no looking back. Whenever there was a function at someone's house, they would ask for me: Send Jiti, they'd say, he'll sing a shabad or two. And I would, sometimes setting the shabad to my own composition, sometimes in the raga specified in the Guru Granth Saheb.

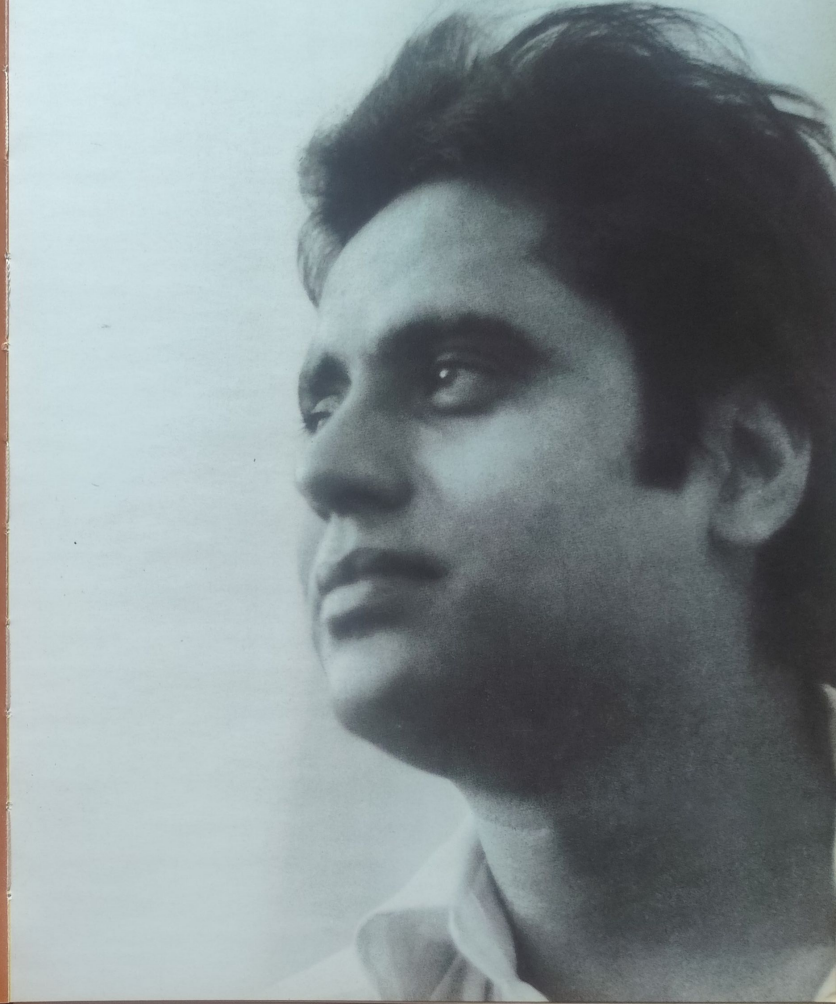
KARTAR SINGH, *younger brother* | There are 13 years between Veerji and myself and sometimes he's more like a father to me than a brother. But with children he himself becomes a child. When I was young, whenever he was free and at home, we'd play together, gulli-danda, a version of seven tiles, hide and seek.

As a strict Namdhari, my father didn't even drink tea and it was not served at home. But we liked tea, and used to have it when he was not at home. If we heard him coming while enjoying our tea, we'd quickly throw it away in the drain or the wash basin. Once, everybody else had got rid of their tea, but I still had some in my cup. What are you drinking? asked Father. Milk, I replied. Show me, he said. And when I showed him the contents of the cup, he asked me, Since when has the buffalo started giving yellow milk!

Veerji was very fond of seeing movies and so was I. But in our house, this was not encouraged. Father did not allow us to see films, and all talk or discussion about films was taboo. But we'd sneak out somehow on some excuse to see favourites like Shammi Kapoor. Even later, when Veerji was in college and we had moved to Ludhiana after Father's retirement, we'd signal each other, tell some innocuous fib and go to see a film, I sitting on the crossbar of his cycle.

JAGJIT SINGH | When I was in school, we'd slip out to see films, especially those that had nice songs. Tickets cost five and a half annas, but there was no

JAGJIT SINGH | ANY NEW SONG I HEARD, I USED TO LEARN. I WAS CRAZY ABOUT TALAT MEHMOOD, AND USED TO WAIT EAGERLY FOR HIS LATEST SONG. I LIKED THECOMPOSITIONS OF MADAN MOHAN VERY MUCH – MANY FILM COMPOSITIONS USED TO BE GHAZALS – AND MY ATTENTION WAS DRAWN TO THOSE TYPES OF VERSES, METRES, COMPOSITIONS; IT WAS LIKE A HIDDEN EDUCATION IN MY SUBCONSCIOUS. THEN I USED TO LISTEN TO CLASSICAL MUSIC ON THE RADIO.



question of asking Father for the money. So what we would do is gather all the bits and pieces of discarded tickets, sort them out, and see which ones we could match and stick together to make a whole ticket. Then we would wait for the most crowded time to press in. Or we would wait for the picture to start and give a sympathetic gate-keeper a couple of annas to let us in. But my father always found out, I don't know how. Once I was seeing a movie when I was collared by Father and taken home on his bicycle. But there were those we saw several times for the music, Shirin-Farhad, which I saw four-five times, Nagin, three-four times.

KARTAR SINGH, *younger brother* | Father had a principle that as long as we were back before sunset, there would be no questions. So in summers we would go to the afternoon show, which finished by about six or six-thirty in order to be home by daylight. But if we came home at night, there would be lots of questions, where were you, whom were you with, what were you doing...

JAGJIT SINGH | I continued gathering the experience of a live audience. When I got to college in Sriganganagar, I remember singing one night in front of about three-four thousand people. Suddenly, the electricity went off, all was in darkness, except the sound system was still live as it was battery-operated. I went on singing, nobody moved, nothing stirred: fittingly, it was a song from the film Pyaasa, "Yeh duniya agar mil bhi jaaye to kya hai". Such incidents and the response from audiences convinced me that I should concentrate on music, and I gave up other activities like football and hockey, which I used to play for the college team.

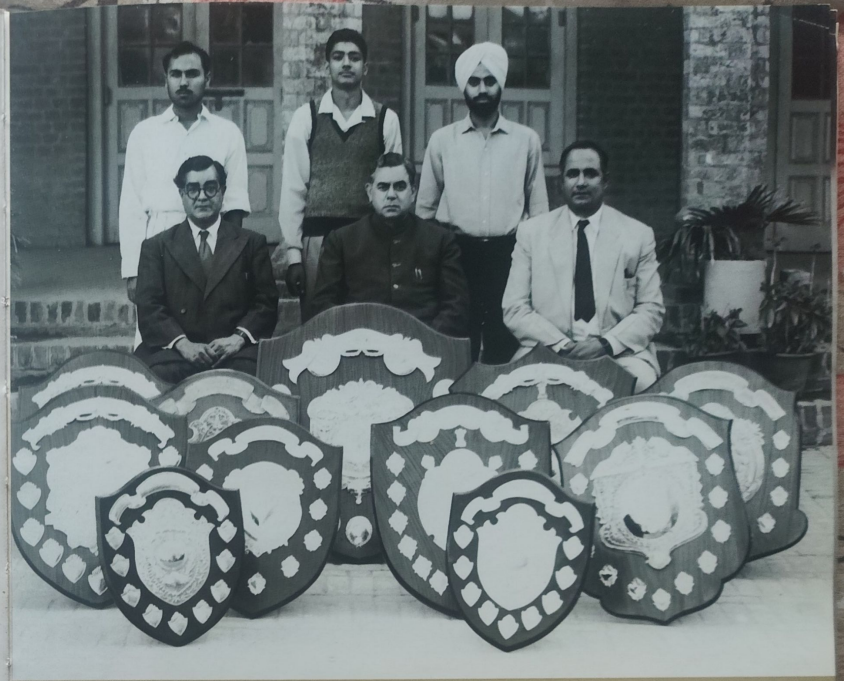
KARTAR SINGH, *younger brother* | I too sat with Veerji and Ustadji when I was a child, that's where I got my love for music. Veerji would sometimes get scolded because of his absorption in music. He would be so immersed in a mehfil that he would forget that he had been sent out to buy kerosene. Or, just before Diwali, he'd be sent out to make purchases then meet up with friends and start singing, and completely forget the time and what he was sent for! At home we would sit and wait for him to return with all the things for the Diwali pooja...

Of course, he would get a scolding from Father; but he would accept it, he never answered back, he was always respectful.

JAGJIT SINGH | Any new song I heard, I used to learn. I was crazy about Talat Mehmood, and used to wait eagerly for his latest song. I liked the compositions of Madan Mohan very much – many of his film compositions used to be ghazals – and my attention was drawn to those types of verses, metres, compositions; it was like a hidden education in my subconscious. Then I used to listen to classical music on the radio, the thumris of Abdul Karim Khan and Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, but later all others paled in comparison to Amir Khan whose music I listened to as often as I could and whose style I began to absorb. I had learnt all the formats of classical music, dhrupad, khayal, thumri; from the very beginning, however, my preference was for the "bol-pradaan" music, where the emphasis is on the words, I was not so enamoured of taans and paltas. I used to memorise all the bandishes with appealing words and I was very fond of poetry.

At Sriganganagar while I was in college doing my First Year Science (F.Sc.) I first took part in the Inter-University Youth Festival. It was quite a process. First you had to compete within the state, which I did at Pilani, and I remember that I tied with another boy for the first place in classical music. So we both went to Jaipur, where I sang Raga Adana and I was chosen to represent what was then Rajputana University at the Festival in Delhi.

It was grand. For a full seven days, we were all camped at Talkatora Gardens in Delhi, about five-six thousand students from all over India. During the day



JAGJIT SINGH | NOW THE COLLEGE HAD A STRONG TEAM. WE ENTERED MANY COMPETITIONS AND WON TROPHY AFTER TROPHY; OTHER TEAMS WOULD SEE US COMING AND SAY, *Mar gaye*! WE'RE DEAD!

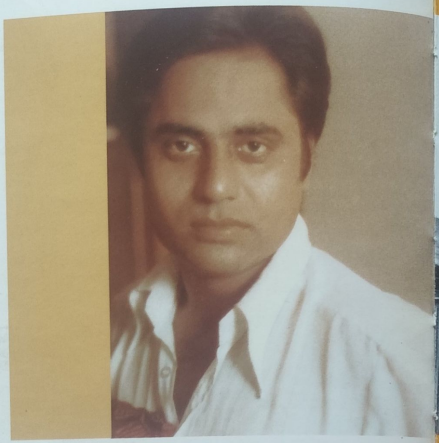
GITA PREM, *rakhi sister* | MUSIC WAS OUR BINDING FORCE; WE SHARED A DEEP INTEREST IN MUSIC AND SINGING...IN THOSE DAYS INTER-COLLEGE COMPETITIONS WERE VERY FREQUENT IN PUNJAB, AND JAGJIT WOULD COME FROM JALANDHAR TO AMRITSAR OFTEN TO PARTICIPATE OR FOR SOME FUNCTION OR OVER A WEEK-END. MY SISTER AND I BOTH SANG. MY MOTHER PREDICTED: YOU WILL REMAIN WHERE YOU ARE, BUT THIS BOY, HE'S GOING TO GO VERY FAR. WE USED TO LAUGH AT HER WORDS, NEVER REALISING HOW TRUE THEY WOULD TURN OUT TO BE.

there'd be theatre and music, and at night, campfires and singing. Here I met Amjad Khan, the actor, who had come with a stage troupe from Bombay; Kumud Chhugani, the Kathak dancer; Purshottam Kapila who was representing Punjab in classical music and Subhash Ghai who is so well-known today. There were no awards, no first, second, third: we each got merit certificates.

But now it was time for me to look for a bigger city, a bigger college. The choices were between Patiala, where my brother was, or Ludhiana, or Jalandhar. I chose DAV College Jalandhar, and the reasons were quite clear: not only did I like the hostel, but I got admission immediately because the Principal, Mr. Suraj Bhan, wanted to attract young talent in all fields, such as music and sports, and would waive hostel and other fees for such people. I paid fees for a few months only; after I performed at a couple of functions, he waived my fees too. Another reason for going was because All India Radio had a station there, and I wanted to audition for them.

AIR used to have competitions, and although I came second in classical music, they failed me for light music! I was graded as a "B" class artiste, which meant that I could get six programmes a year, a 15-minute segment of live music. The money I earned came in handy, but more than that, it was the exposure I was getting and the learning process that kept me knocking at the doors of radio. I remember singing Raga Gorakh Kalyan once and Raga Bageshwari once. Later I was approved for light music also. And it was in the Jalandhar station of AIR that I first met Sudarshan Faakir, who was working there at that time. He was not then the renowned poet that he is today.

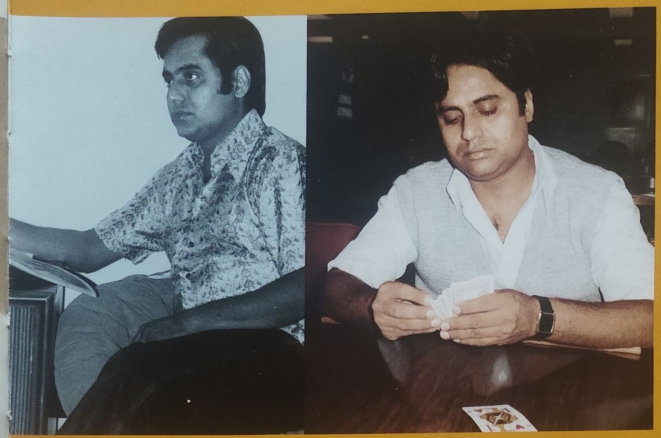
SUDARSHAN FAAKIR, *poet* | I have known him for 40 years, just under half a century. I first met him in about 1962, when the President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, was to attend a function at DAV College, Jalandhar. A few days before he came, Jagjit Singh asked me to write a song...he was an established artiste in Jalandhar even then. I wrote the lyrics and he composed the tune.



As the President ascended the stage, Jagjit Singh in his inimitable voice in medium volume sang "Swagatam, swagatam, kehte hai hum apne mehmaan ko pranaam hum, swagatam..." – *Welcome, welcome to our guest, whom we greet with folded hands...*

This was my first encounter with him, and the first song I wrote for him. When I wrote this song, Jagjit Singh asked me how much I wanted for it. He got me a sum of 300 rupees, unheard of in those days when poets writing for the radio got 25 rupees for five ghazals!

GITA PREM, *rakhi sister* | I have known him since we were both college students 40 years ago, he in Jalandhar and I in Amritsar. Music was our binding force; we shared a deep interest in music and singing;



my own home had a musical atmosphere. In those days inter-college competitions were very frequent in Punjab, and Jagjit would come from Jalandhar to Amritsar often to participate or for some function or over a week-end. I met him and took him to my home, after which he'd visit us; yes, that was rare for Punjab at that time, such meetings between boys and girls did not usually happen, but my parents accepted him somehow.

My sister and I both sang. My mother predicted: You will remain where you are, but this boy, he's going to go very far. We used to laugh at her words, never realising how true they would turn out to be.

JAGJIT SINGH | Around this time I made the shift to light music. In the same college as mine was a student called Purshottam Kapila who had represented Punjab at the Inter-University Youth Festival. Since we were both classical music singers, and it was possible for only one to prevail, I decided to change to light music, where I was good at compositions, though my riyaz continued in the classical style.

Now the college had a strong team: Kapila for classical, myself for light and a sitar player (whom we'd taken from radio and enrolled in college!) for instrumental: these were the three types of competitive entries. We entered many competitions and won trophy after trophy; other teams would see us coming and say, *Mar gaye*! we're dead! Slowly, slowly I started acquiring fans who would ask for requests like "Rukh se pardah hata de"; I also sang at private parties, where often a hundred rupee note would be lovingly pressed into my hand..This, plus my income from radio, made me relatively well off. But all these months I had neither attended class nor studied, so when the finals came, I didn't do the examinations. I switched to Arts and repeated the third year. Life in college was comfortable enough that I didn't want to leave it.

Besides, in the summer, there was the enrolment into the police to look forward to. It used to happen like this: from 1960, each summer the police would have a competitive Police Cultural Meet. The famous Ashwini Kumar made it a point to enrol good musicians into the force for two months to coincide with the Meet; year after year, the Punjab Police walked off with all the trophies in all the categories – classical, light, group song, instrumental. The venues were always the choicest for the summer heat, places like Simla, Srinagar and Ooty.

The Ooty Meet took place in 1961. When the others returned to Jalandhar, I went to Bombay to scout out the prospects for a career in playback singing. I had previously met the actor Om Prakash in Simla when he had come there to shoot a film. A local official had told him: There's a boy here from Jalandhar, he sings very well, why don't we have a mehfil in the evening. So he listened to me and was very impressed. If you ever come to Bombay, he said, look me up and I'll give you some introductions.

So I came to Bombay and stayed at a small hotel near the V.T. Railway station, where each morning I would be woken by what was then the latest film hit, "Teri pyaari pyaari surat ko...", played at full volume. Om Prakash used to stay in Chembur, and I contacted him there. He received me very warmly and gave me introductions to the famous music directors of that time like Madan Mohan and Shankar-Jaikishen; I also met Jaidev, and Manmohan Krishna who ran a radio programme of ghazals. Jaikishen gave me a voice test at Famous Studio. He liked my voice, but told me that it would take time and that I would have to live in Bombay.

By this time, my money was running out, so I sent a telegram to Father to send money. Unfortunately, I did not give an address! After settling the hotel bill with my little remaining cash, I still had a few rupees in hand, but not enough to retrieve my clothes from the dhobi or to buy a ticket home. So I travelled by train from Bombay to Jalandhar minus a ticket, hiding in the bathroom whenever the ticket collector came. This first trip to Bombay set the ground for what was to happen just a few years later.

But meanwhile, there were still examinations to cope with. When now the finals came, it was the same story: had not studied. I have to be honest: I and my friends cheated. We sat near each other for the History exam and passed the answers around, taking turns with each question. The invigilator turned a blind eye, perhaps because I had sung shabad at his house, but other eyes were watching. Somebody reported us to the Inspector. The next day we were confident of being able to get away with it again; once more, we had come fully loaded with our bits of paper. An hour after the paper had begun, the Inspector came and with a grave face called us out of the room. We thought we

KARTAR SINGH *younger brother* | AFTER ABOUT A MONTH WE GOT A LETTER FROM HIM SAYING, I'M IN BOMBAY, DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME, I HAVE A JOB (THOUGH I DON'T THINK HE DID AT THAT TIME). HE RETURNED TO LUDHIANA BRIEFLY LATER THAT SAME YEAR.

were now going to get some severe punishment; so did the others who were quite gleeful about it; instead he seated us in the next room, which was empty, and said, Do it here in peace, others complain if you do it there.

When the results came, I was in Simla and got the news there. I had passed in the third division. At that time, 1963, Simla was the most popular resort in the north; all day, I wandered on the Mall, at night I had to return to my friend's house in Chhota Simla, a walk of about three to four kilometres done in the pitch blackness of unlit streets. That was also where I met the poet Shiv Kumar Batalvi who had been sent there to recuperate from TB.

Father had now retired, and the family lived in Ludhiana where he had purchased a small plot with the idea of setting up a small factory. In Ludhiana my great friend was Hardaman Singh Bhogal, whose family dealt in cycle parts. He liked my music very much and always supported and encouraged me in many ways.

Father was keen that I should sit for the IAS examinations, so I decided to take history as a subject. The Vice-Chancellor of the newly-opened Kurukshetra University was Mr. Suraj Bhan, my old Principal from DAV College in Jalandhar. He admitted me instantly, and asked me to invite others to enrol in the college also. I asked Iqbal Singh (now ex-M. P.), who had played the tabla with me and was in Jalandhar, to join us, and he too came; he and I shared a room so that we could practise together. Singing started in real earnest, and we participated in functions.

Sometimes the results were quite unexpected. When I was in college in Jalandhar, I had developed a romance with a girl. When I say "romance" it was within the custom of that time and place. There was a ladies college in front of ours, and many were the glances exchanged between boys and girls. There was no question of talking to a girl, such things were not done and would have caused a public reaction. So the most you could do was look ardently at each other, maybe drop a note for her to read. Such was my romance. By coincidence, she also came to Kurukshetra, to the Sports College there. She had another admirer, a sardar, who got to know about me. In a fit of jealousy, he collected four-five boys and sent them out with hockey sticks to look for me and teach me a lesson. It so happened that the very next day there was a function at which I was singing – it was a Kishore Kumar song, I remember – and they liked the song so much that they became my fans! From that day, a staunch friendship developed between all of us, we formed our own group and they looked after me while I was at Kurukshetra.

We enjoyed our hostel life, as young men do. Our form of ragging was to strip and blacken our faces. We'd knock on the doors of the freshers, and hold a diya under our chins for a horror-film look, then demand money, which was always given by the terrified hostellers.

Once again, the examinations were coming up. This was March 1965, and I was convinced that there was no point in taking the exams, I was not prepared, I had not studied. My friend from Ludhiana, Hardaman Singh Bhogal, told me I was wasting my time and encouraged me to go to Bombay to pursue music. He said that he would help me, and after assessing my own capabilities, I had the feeling that I could make it.

KARTAR SINGH, *younger brother* | We knew about his going to Bombay only after he had arrived there, and that through his close friend Hardaman Singh Bhogal. While Veerji was away it was he who kept in contact with us, asking us if we needed anything. After about a month we got a letter from him saying, I'm in Bombay, don't worry about me, I have a job (though I don't think he did at that time). He returned to Ludhiana, briefly later that same year, 1965, the year of the Indo-Pak war. By then my parents had cooled down.

JAGJIT SINGH | Today ghazal is not just for entertainment, it is a form with responsibilities towards the social system, towards youth and the next generation. That it has an impact is certain – otherwise why would I be asked to do an album on what is happening today in Gujarat? So an artiste has responsibilities; to sing in front of people merely to please and entertain them for money, that is not music, no. You have to give a message, but must make it appealing. There should be no vulgarity or cheapness; there should be a classical touch but the sound should be modern. Thus the approach today is different.

In my albums, there are some ghazals with a message, a philosophy of life, although you could say that all ghazals are at heart philosophical in nature. People think that ghazals are all about drink, the drinking cup and so on. At one time, these were meant for a wealthy audience to whom couplets on poverty and social ills would not have appealed. Yet in the past decades think of the Progressive Poets who wrote about society, Kaifi saheb, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Sahir before his film era – they have written on social problems, political problems, communal problems. But nobody sang those, they were not entertainment.

When I select poetry for singing, I look at it from my point of view. It is not a question of selecting from well-known older poets, or young poets – it is a matter of language. If I can understand the language, only then can I communicate the thought to the audience. But if I don't understand, how can I make others? Secondly, the thought content: that must be meaningful, related to life, its emotions of joy and sorrow. It must have the human touch, it should not be phoney. In short, the poetry must be singable from every point of view.

GULZAR, *poet* | He is able to communicate the ghazal because his voice is beautiful and so is his rendering. He presents each word in the context of the verse, like bringing to the ear something fragile, so that its intent is clear. His voice caresses the words, that's what sets him apart from other singers. But abstract images trouble him a bit. When he hears something difficult for people to understand, or that sounds vague, he says, surely that must be a verse of Gulzar's!

RANA SAHRI, *poet* | When words are given their proper musical meaning, it gives them new life, they are immortalised... I have only written the words, he has ornamented them, dressed them, given them depth and shading, given musical voice to the poet's concept.

Jagjit Singh has always sought out good poetry from any source, he has not gone after only big names. He doesn't need to. He is himself a name. Countless poets have been encouraged by him, some of whom have gone on to fame. I came to Bombay in 1983 with a dream that he would sing my verses. The very first time I met him – with no introduction, itself significant in a city where nothing happens unless you penetrate layers of influence – he took out a diary in which he had written a ghazal. Whose ghazal is this, he asked. Hesitatingly I replied, It's mine. My friend, he said, I've been searching for you for some months. I have recorded this ghazal. Go to HMV tomorrow and sign the agreement, then come to me.

You can imagine the effect on me. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry, or simply embrace him. To have come with a dream, to have it fulfilled like this, so soon...I was overwhelmed.

At that very first meeting, he asked me to recite one of my other poems. You won't believe it, but as I did, he pulled the harmonium towards him and started composing the music for it on the spot. It was included in their very next album, "A Sound Affair".

SUDARSHAN FAAKIR, *poet* | Of Jagjit Singh I will say that his selection of poetry is of very high standard. But you'll be amazed to know that he can make up his mind about a ghazal after reading it or listening to it just once. He listens to the ghazal, and *bas*! that's it, immediately he is aware of whether or not it is suitable for his style of singing.

I'll tell you an incident. He was making the first digital recording of ghazal in London, "Beyond Time". He told me, For this album, I'll select 14 poets and sing 14 ghazals. By chance he had a few moments to spare, so he began to recite some scintillating verses from the works of other poets. At that time, not one of my ghazals was featured in his selection. I wasn't sharp enough to convey to him that I too had written some suitable ghazals, and to please sing one of them.So I told him, Bhapaji, I have read the matla of a ghazal somewhere, I don't know where, I don't know which poet has written it, but – like the brilliant verses you've just recited – that too is good and I liked it very much. He asked, What is it? Let me hear it! So I recited it to him:

"Saamne hai jo, usse log bura kehte hain,
Jisko dekha hi nahi, usko Khuda kehte hain..."
The visible we speak ill of –
The invisible we call God....

Immediately he said, I'll sing this! Who is the poet? Wherever he is, whether in India or Pakistan, I'll take the copyright, it's a very good ghazal. I told him, You don't need to go to any other city in India or as far as Pakistan, the poet is right in front of you! And he took out some money from his pocket and gave it to me saying, This is the signing amount, the balance I'll pay you later, now go ahead and complete the ghazal. This is just an illustration of how quickly he makes his selection.

RANA SAHRI, *poet* | Often Urdu poets are not well off. About 15-20 years ago, some poets decided to band together to ask for compensation for their ghazals sung at mehfils and concerts. Recording was another matter, they got royalties from that, but nothing for this. They approached other singers, the top stars of the day, but were not well received. Then they came to Jagjit Singh. He formed a forum and they decided that whenever a ghazal was sung at functions, a record of songs and poets would be kept, and the poets paid part of his earnings. That was a very big thing, and he was the first ghazal singer to do this.

SUDARSHAN FAAKIR, *poet* | Once I told him that long ago I had written two verses of a nazm. Its opening lines were "Yeh daulat bhi le lo, yeh shohrat bhi le lo..." I recited these verses to him and he exclaimed, Where have you been hiding this all this time! I want to sing it! He didn't listen to it a second time, his mind was already made up.

As I completed this nazm, better known as "Kaagaz ki Kashti", memories of my own childhood came to me. This nazm has a kind of universality because it was drawn from the roots of my own childhood, that was the reality I portrayed in verse, and perhaps that's why it became so popular. Jagjit Singh himself says quite openly that of all the verses he's sung, this one, "Kaagaz ki Kashti", is the most popular.

And, in his humorous way, he often says, If in any concert I don't sing this nazm, people have their own way of requesting it, what they sometimes do is to make a paper boat (kaagaz ki kashti) and place it on my harmonium! Then I understand that this is a request for the nazm!

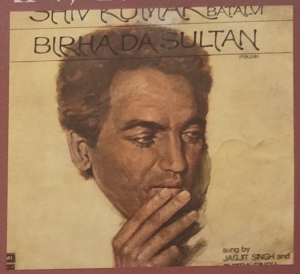
Every ghazal has its own destiny, where will it go, who will sing it, how popular it will become. Jagjit Singh was my destiny. I'm thankful that "Kaagaz ki Kashti" went into his hands. Anyone else would not have been able to make it so popular.

BIRHA DA SULTAN, 1976

JAGJIT SINGH | Shiv Kumar Batalvi was very popular in Punjab. I had known him when I went to Simla in 1963 as a student on summer holiday. He was then in the hill resort for treatment for TB, and we used to meet every day, have mehfils in the evenings, discuss and recite or sing poetry till late into the night.

After his death, I wanted to do an album of his poems, and approached HMV just after "The Unforgettables" with a proposal for an album. They agreed and I selected the poems, to be sung as solos by either Chitra or myself, with some duets between the both of us. The portrait of Shiv Kumar Batalvi on the cover was painted by Imroze, Amrita Pritam's companion, and the album was a success especially in Punjab.

RAMAN KUMAR, *film and TV writer-director* | The very first time I saw or heard Jagjit Singh was during a concert he gave at my college, in the early 70s. I remember clearly that he sang a Shiv Kumar Batalvi song, "Shikra". Then I went to the FTII in Pune, where one day a friend said to me, There's a fantastic new album which has just come out. You must listen to it. The album was "Birha da Sultan", and there I heard Jagjit Singh singing "Shikra" for the second time. His interpretation was magnificent, and the album and its singers haunted me for the next few years. So much so that after I graduated from film school, when I was about to make my first film, I was determined that the voices of the hero and heroine would be those of Jagjit Singh and Chitra Singh.

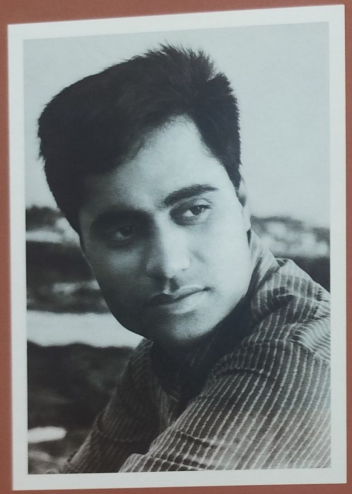


KARTAR SINGH, *younger brother* | Shiv Kumar Batalvi is a big name in Punjab, you can call him the Raj Kavi of the state. His poems are very sad, in which love and death figure prominently. It's said that the girl whom he was fascinated by went away and married someone else. He himself was immersed in poetry and unfortunately died very young.

When Veerji sings his work, he brings tears to the eyes. The album, "Birha da Sultan", was a big hit in Punjab because Veerji had selected some of his most popular ghazals. Its title is taken from a line of a very famous ghazal, actually a geet, of Shiv Kumar's. The poet used to recite his verse in melody, set to a tune, and when Veerji composed for the album he kept quite close to those originals. Some of his metaphors are very stark; for example, in "Shikra" he compares his beloved to a falcon who won't eat what he offers "so I fed it the flesh of my heart". Till today, a quarter of a century after the album was released, these poems are always requested at Veerji's concerts.

STREETS OF GOLD

1965-1967



JAGJIT SINGH | WHEN I ARRIVED IN BOMBAY, I STAYED FOR A FEW DAYS AT GOPE HOUSE ON ELPHINSTONE ROAD...IT DID NOT TAKE ME LONG TO MAKE A FEW FRIENDS. MY DAILY ROUTINE WAS TO TAKE THE TRAIN TO CHURCHGATE STATION, AND FROM THERE PROMENADE THE STRETCH WHERE BERRY'S, ASIATIC, GAYLORD'S, WERE ALL SITUATED. UP AND DOWN WE WOULD WALK, I AND MY FRIENDS, PAUSING FOR A CUP OF TEA AT ASIATIC (WHICH IN THOSE DAYS WAS A RESTAURANT), MAKING OUR WAY TO THE TALK OF THE TOWN.

JAGJIT SINGH | In March 1965, a month before my examinations, I took the Pathankot Express and came to Bombay. I didn't tell anyone that I was leaving. After about a month or two, I wrote to my father that I was in Bombay and that I had decided to stay there to make my career in music. My friend Hardaman Singh Bhogal – who indeed had encouraged me to come – explained things to Father, who accepted my decision. Hardaman had said that he would help me, and he did; he supported me financially for six months, sending me 150 or 200 rupees a month; in those days that was quite sufficient. After that I took care of myself from the money I earned.

When I arrived in Bombay, I stayed for a few days at Gope House on Elphinstone Road with someone from Ludhiana, then I took a room as a paying guest for 30 rupees a month. After some days, I returned to the room to find all my baggage thrown out! I asked the man who had rented me the room what had happened; and found that he too was a tenant, he had sub-let a portion of the room to me. The landlord had flung us both out, bag and baggage.

I then went to the Sher-e-Punjab hostel in Agripada, and that became my home for the next few years. It was quite a place, a room with an iron cot in each corner, so there were four occupants sharing it. As soon as you entered you got the smell of bed-bugs, which were abundant. I remember having the dry skin of my foot chewed off by rats one night. There was a common bathroom outside; at a later stage, we persuaded the landlord to instal one inside the room, in one corner. The room had a floating population, many people came and went in the other beds. But the room had its advantages, one of which was what I called "room service". There was a teashop below, and I only had to call out for tea to have it brought up to me. In nearby Dadar was the Gupta Restaurant where I ate on credit.

It did not take me long to make a few friends. My daily routine was to take the train to Churchgate Station, and from there promenade the stretch where Berry's, Asiatic, Gaylord's, were all situated. Up and down we would walk, I and my friends, pausing for a cup of tea at Asiatic (which in those days was a restaurant), making our way to The Talk of the Town. The music director Jaikishen used to stand in front of Gaylord's all dressed in white. How I hoped that he would notice me, call me...He never did. Jaidev too used to be there.

Our patron and guide was Mr. Berry, the owner of the restaurant of the same name. He used to allow us to eat there for free and was very helpful to me.

GITA PREM, *rakhi sister* | I got married and a year later my husband and I came to Bombay. One afternoon I was alone in the house when I heard a knock on the door. I wondered who it could be. I opened the door, and there was Jagjit. At that time – this was in 1965 – he still had the Sikh turban and beard. I exclaimed: You! What are you doing in Bombay? He said, I'm through with studies and thought I'd come to Bombay to see what I could do here. He told me that he was staying at the Sher-e-Punjab hostel. From that time, he used to visit us very often.

Once he came two or three days before Raksha Bandhan. He told me, They have sent rakhis from home. Alright, I said, your sisters are not here, I'll tie the rakhi on you. Fine, he said. Then he asked, How are things with you? Carrying on, I replied.

You see, we were then all in the same boat, in a financially precarious situation. Sometimes there was money and sometimes there wasn't. He said, I'll tell you something. I have room-mates, and we've all received rakhis from home. I'll bring my room-mates over for lunch on Rakhi day, and you tie the rakhis for all of us. They don't have big budgets, five rupees is all they can afford, but you'll get that much at least from each. That will add up to 20 rupees – and what

JAGJIT SINGH | IN THE 60S, THERE WAS A FORMAT KNOWN AS EP – EXTENDED PLAY WHICH WAS LONGER THAN THE CONVENTIONAL GRAMOPHONE RECORDS, ABOUT TEN MINUTES PER SIDE. THE FIRST RECORD WITH HMV WAS AN EP WITH TWO OF MY GHAZALS ON ONE SIDE AND TWO BY ANOTHER SINGER ON THE OTHER SIDE. THAT WAS QUITE USUAL AT THAT TIME. THE MUSIC DIRECTOR WAS C. K. CHAUHAN. WE REHEARSED EVERY DAY.

do you have to do for that sum, just feed them! So he brought them, and I made them all rakhi brothers!

It is a tradition that he maintains to this day; he has always given me the respect and affection of a brother for his sister. Each year when he is in Bombay he comes all the way to meet me, a journey of hours, just to spend those moments together and have his rakhi tied.

JAGJIT SINGH | One of the members of our Churchgate crowd was Jimmy Narula, who used to work with HMV, the recording company. Within six months of arriving in Bombay, I had an audition with the company.

In the 60s, there was a format known as EP – Extended Play – which was longer than the conventional gramophone records, about ten minutes per side. The first record with HMV was an EP with two of my ghazals on one side and two by another singer, Suresh Rajvanshi, on the other side. That was quite usual at that time. The music director was C. K. Chauhan. We rehearsed every day. One ghazal I sang in the style of Mukesh, who was then at the height of his popularity, the other, "Saqiya hosh kahan tha..." in my own style.

The ghazals were recorded. Now I was told to take a picture of myself for the album. I still had my long hair, a beard and turban, and that was when I decided to cut my hair. It was a matter of identity. I knew that whatever picture was taken, that was how I would have to remain for the rest of my career, so I felt it was better to cut my hair. Once again, I turned to Mr. Berry for help and he took me to a barber near the Ritz Hotel and told him to cut off my hair. Are you sure, asked the barber. Yes, sure, I replied; and that was it, my hair was cut.

The same evening I had to sing at a wedding party where, of course, no one could recognise me because of my new appearance! Two or three days later, a man from Ludhiana approached my friend Thapar and myself near Gaylord's. I'm looking for Jagjit Singh, he said, can you tell me where I can find him? Since I wanted to avoid him, Thapar told him I was not there. The man looked straight at me, could not recognise me, and went away. But when Father learnt that I had cut my hair, he was very upset, he cut off contact with me for some time.

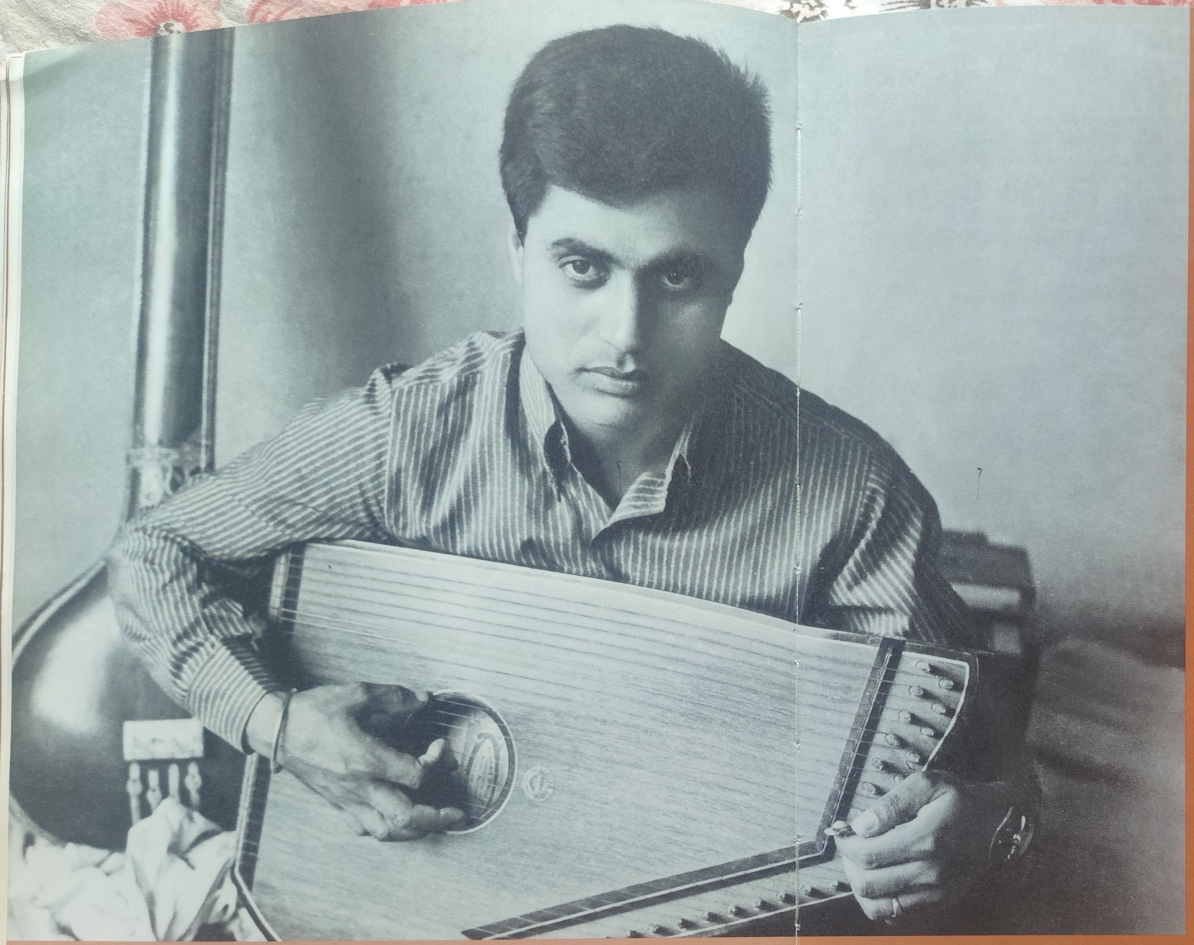
KARTAR SINGH, *younger brother* | Initially Father didn't like his going to Bombay. He felt bad that he had cut his hair, Father was a staunch Sikh and didn't like it. But eventually he got reconciled, saying only, Later you must grow back your hair. I think as fame and fortune came to Veerji, Father also dropped the idea.

GITA PREM, *rakhi sister* | In the 60s, I don't think he was homesick in any deep sense. If he missed home, there was always our house to come to. I remember his mother would make wonderful laddoos, pack them into a large Dalda tin and send them to him; we'd all eat them with relish. We really enjoyed life on our very limited budgets, there was always a lot of laughter and jokes. He's a very good mimic, and I like to mimic too; we'd do take-offs of people we knew, of singers and their styles, and there were times when the whole apartment building would resound with our roars of laughter. The other occupants must have wondered what was going on!

So there was really no occasion for depression. And yes, he went through hard times, as we all did, but other newcomers have been known to be so down-and-out that they have to sleep on the footpaths, this misfortune was never one he had to contend with. He managed somehow; and we'd try and get him some small programme or a house concert for 100 rupees.

Sometimes we'd go by bus to Berry's in Churchgate. Come, I'll give you a cup of tea there, he'd say, adding, But mind you don't ask for something to eat. Okay, maybe just a sandwich – are you hungry?

KARTAR SINGH, *younger brother* | WHEN HE WAS NEW IN BOMBAY, ALL THE BIG FILM PEOPLE WOULD CALL HIM TO THEIR HOUSES TO SING. THEY USE TO MAKE FALSE PROMISES ABOUT GIVING HIM A CHANCE IN FILMS JUST SO THAT HE WOULD PERFORM FREE FOR THEM.



SANJEEV KOHLI, *Son of music director, the late Madan Mohan; ex-HMV* | WHEN JAGJIT SINGH CAME TO BOMBAY HE BEGAN THE ARDUOUS STRUGGLE OF KNOCKING ON THE DOORS OF THE FILM INDUSTRY, BUT IN VAIN. NO COMPROMISES FOR THE YOUNG MAN, HE HAD TO CARVE HIS OWN NICHE. AND HE DISCOVERED THE GHAZAL: OR SHOULD WE SAY, THE GHAZAL DISCOVERED HIM. JAGJIT SINGH MADE THE GHAZAL HIS BELOVED. THE GHAZAL AND JAGJIT SINGH SHAPED EACH OTHER'S DESTINY.

On one such occasion we were on a double-decker bus going through Peddar Road and he said to me, Look. One day your brother will certainly have a flat in one of these tall buildings. And as you pass by in the bus, you'll have to crane your neck upwards to see it. I said, Nonsense! But who knew then that his jesting prediction would come true.

JAGJIT SINGH | I SANG AT MANY FILM PARTIES, AT THE CELEBRATIONS OF PEOPLE LIKE H. S. RAWAIL, BALRAJ SAHNI, RAJINDER KUMAR, EVEN RAJ KAPOOR. I WAS A HIT AT THESE PARTIES, AT EVERY PARTY JAGJIT SINGH HAD TO BE THERE. BUT NOBODY GAVE ME PLAYBACK WORK IN FILMS.

JAGJIT SINGH | When I came to Bombay in 1965, the scope for a singer was either film music or classical, there was no light non-film music, which today is such a parallel and thriving line. At that time I was a turban-tying sardar, so I actually got a role in a film called Aman made in Famous Studio by Mohan Kumar. Rajinder Kumar played the hero. The scene was a party given to celebrate the hero's passing the examinations, the other students go there to congratulate him, and I'm the sardar student. But I was not fond of acting, and saw this as only a time-pass.

My first film song was in a Gujarati film, Bahurupi, and it was Ajit Merchant who gave me that break. That was around 1968.

Hindi films were another matter. I sang at many film parties, at the celebrations of people like H. S. Rawail, Balraj Sahni, Rajinder Kumar, even Raj Kapoor. I was a hit at these parties, at every party Jagjit Singh had to be there. But nobody gave me playback work in films.

The fact is, I got no encouragement in films. There was a clique in those days. Raj Kapoor meant Mukesh or Manna Dey, not even Rafi. Newcomers were not accepted, perhaps for fear of upsetting the established voices, or maybe my voice was not suitable for films, as all the heroes had their own styles.

KARTAR SINGH, *younger brother* | When he was new in Bombay, all the big film people would call him to their houses to sing. They use to make false promises about giving him a chance in films just so that he would perform free for them. Young artistes do such things in the hope of an opportunity. So he tried but when he saw that nothing was happening, he made a place for himself elsewhere.

In film music your voice may not suit every hero in every situation. The musicality of his voice, its depth, its pain, how would it suit a hero who runs around trees? And some of that nonsense, tell me, how would it sound coming from him? Perhaps this is the realisation he came to. He tried once or twice, then felt, I'm not cut out for these things, this doesn't sound right coming from my mouth. He was smart enough to realise this and change to a line where he could choose his songs, nothing cheap or light. And he focused his energy and talent elsewhere instead of wasting time on films.

RAMAN KUMAR, *film and TV writer- director* | In 20 years from 1962 to 1982, four male singers reigned in playback and could not be replaced. Jagjit Singh was successful because he developed his own style and didn't try to be like them. That's why he survived. He became successful because he was different from them, otherwise he would have been just lost. Many singers got lost in those 20 years. Today it's easy to become a singer because there is so much exposure.

For 20 years music also did not change. Nobody wanted change. The great music directors didn't introduce new singers. Jagjit Singh made his mark despite them, not because of them, through his own talent and style. Nobody brought in even one new singer or new lyrics or any new thing to the industry. They delivered great music, of course, they contributed to art, to music, but did not contribute to the industry. The boom came after the 90s, with television and the kind of exposure that gave.

SANJEEV KOHLI, *son of music director, the late Madan Mohan; ex-HMV* | When Jagjit Singh came to Bombay he began the arduous struggle of knocking on the doors of the film industry, but in vain. It was the golden era of film music, the 60s, and it was "house full". There was an abundance of talent and no place for an outsider.

No compromises for the young man, he had to carve his own niche. And he discovered the ghazal: or should we say, the ghazal discovered him. Jagjit Singh made the ghazal his beloved. The ghazal and Jagjit Singh shaped each other's destiny.

I'm very clear why he didn't become a playback singer. Jagjitji's biggest asset is also his biggest liability: that gorgeous, gorgeous voice is most suited to his own compositions. He's a very strong composer himself, and has rarely sung other people's tunes. That is a problem. He composes in a way that is most fitting for his own voice.

Let's take an example, Saath Saath, the film whose music was composed by Kuldip Singh. Kuldipji is a great music director. But then Saath Saath is more Jagjit Singh's kind of music, so akin to his own style; and I'm sure that he and Kuldip Singh worked on it together.

Later there was also the conflict between film music and non-film music. Because he became so big in non-film music, I think there was tremendous resentment in the film firmament against him, tremendous. In times when film music stalwarts were passing away and film music losing its magic, he had created a completely new option, he became an alternative. That, I don't think the music directors of that era could tolerate. And I think that Jagjitji realised that he had created a viable option, so why not just stay there?

Another thing – film music in the 80s was at its nadir, nothing was happening. Films were depicting angry young men, dacoits, violence, dons. One cabaret number and one situational dance song, that's what heroes were singing in the 80s, so where would Jagjit Singh have fitted in?

JAGJIT SINGH | At the time HMV released the first EP, there was no promotion. The disc was sent to radio stations, the only way to reach a large audience, and that was it. There was no way of telling whether sales took place because of you or the other singer on the EP. Anyway, the EP sold quite well – in those days a sale of 5000 copies was considered good – then HMV

asked me to do an independent EP. So I chose four ghazals and set them to music myself.

CHITRA SINGH, *wife* | I saw Jagjit first when he came to perform at the house of a neighbour. I was then married to Debo Prasad Dutta, and from my balcony I could look into her drawing room and also see her balcony. One evening I saw a young man on her balcony wearing tight white pants and a white shirt, the pants so tight that it was difficult to walk. Later I learnt that this was Jagjit Singh, a new singer. This must have been about 1965. My neighbour played me tapes of his music, saying, What a voice this man has! You may like it, I said, but I don't.

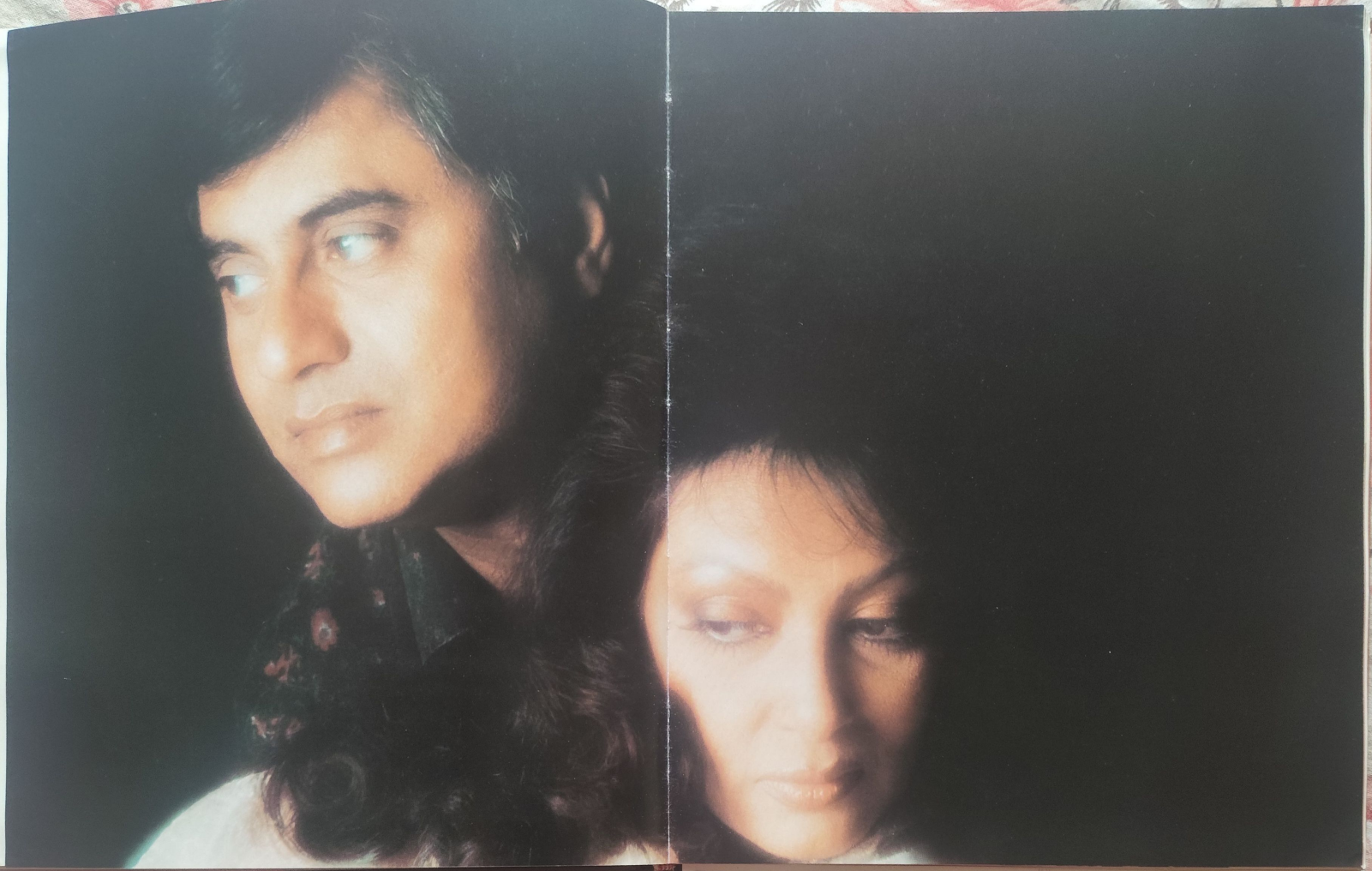
Time went by. My husband changed jobs and we moved to a new flat. In our flat we had a recording studio, because my husband had a talent for recording. Our drawing room was the studio and in those days he was doing stereo before even the commercial studios had this facility. Many recordings were done there, film recordings too, for directors like Shyam Benegal and Mrinal Sen. A man called Vaidyanathan used to record jingles in the studio. He knew that I sang, word had got around. One day Lakshmi Shankar was supposed to come to record a jingle, but for some reason she couldn't make it. Nathan asked my husband, Will she sing? I had no objections. I had never been commercially recorded before, and was nervous but excited. I sang the jingle; eventually I did so many jingles that I was called Jingle Queen. More than half the jingles on radio were sung by me, in all kinds of languages, 17-18 of them, from Nepali to Tamil and Telegu.

One day a producer came and asked if he could come early to rehearse his singer, and also asked me to sing, including a duet. I asked who would sing with me, because my scale is high and it's difficult to find a male voice to match. There's a certain singer, he said; he'll come, you'll see him. The door bell rang. I opened the door to find a man with an arm draped over the door frame, asleep. He came in, lay flat on the floor and went to sleep. When he woke up, without washing face or hands, he pulled the harmonium towards him and started singing. I looked closely at him: it was the same man I had seen on the balcony in the tight white pants. I heard him singing and whispered to the music director: I can't sing with him! See his scale, see mine. The music director said, Don't worry. But when the time came to rehearse, he was not prepared to take a higher scale, and I was not prepared to take a lower scale. Now what? The music director suggested an in-between scale as a compromise, and I agreed, though much against my wishes.

When the recording was over and Mr. Dutta heard it, he fell in love with Jagjit's voice and listened to it over and over again. I can't say the same for myself. I didn't like his voice.

DEBO PRASAD DUTTA, *Chitra's first husband* | I thought he had a fantastic voice. I used to pick him up from his hostel and bring him over to our place where we would enjoy his music. And I was really charmed by his ability to give different interpretations to music and compose in a totally different way.He comes from a classical background about which I got to know much later, he never ever shows it off. Its only when you listen to him sing That you realize with what subtlety and ease he switches over from light to classical. He has this tremendous charisma and a magnetism that takes him through- whether it's a studiohand or a producer or his audience- he just charms them all.

CHITRA SINGH | I FORGOT HIS UGLY VOICE, "UGLY" TO ME BECAUSE I DIDN'T LIKE THAT KIND OF DEEP VOICE. BUT WE ALL LIKED HIM – HE WAS VERY GENTLE, SHY, QUIET, PLUS THAT TALENT FOR SINGING – THOUGH TO ME HE WAS A COMPOSER FIRST, THEN A SINGER.



JEHANGIR CHOWDHURI, *son-in-law and cinematographer* | He has this ability to take you away from the moment, carrying you away from the present, which is wonderful because it transcends many things and as he does that, you float along with him. For anybody to do that it takes great skill, talent, emotion, dedication, and he has it all in ample measures. And above all, what comes through is that he is not talking about something abstract or hypothetical, but true feelings and emotions that come from the depth of his own heart. That is why he pulls you along so effortlessly.

JAGJIT SINGH | I used to joke about how I met Chitra: I used to tell people that I was wrestling with Dara Singh when he picked me up and dropped me in her lap! But the truth is that the first time I met her was in Mr. Dutta's studio, rehearsing and then recording ghazals for Mahinderjit Singh who was Chitra's guru. The second time was when recording jingles. In 1967, the AIR channel Vividh Bharati started airing commercials, and with it came a whole new demand for jingles. There was a man called Nathan, Vaidyanathan, who used to compose jingles. He wanted a voice for an LIC jingle, Chitra suggested my name. After that when the jingles came up, I used to record with Nathan there, in the Dutta studio.

DEBO PRASAD DUTTA, *Chitra's first husband* | From the time radio commercials became a big thing, around 1967-68, about 85% of them were recorded in my studio. Jagjit used to do a lot of music for me. Jingles, ad films, backgrounds for documentaries: he and I worked together for years with a lot of contribution from both sides.

I remember one classic example which shows Jagjit's unusual way of thinking. I had done a documentary on a heavy engineering product, 400KW transformers, and I asked him to compose the music for it. Now in my mind I had the idea of pounding music representing power. He came up with a lyrical score with a folk background. So I asked him, Do you think this will blend? He said, Why not? Ultimately, for whom is this power being generated? For the people, for the farmers.

So I went with it – and the client loved it. Because it had a lilt and a feel for the people for whom it was being made, and it was not the cliché of thumping music representing heavy power.

JAGJIT SINGH | Slowly Chitra and I grew closer. There was already tension in that marriage, and she was on the verge of a split even before we met, so I was not the reason. When the break finally happened, I was there.

We still keep in touch with Mr. Dutta. We meet, we have good relations. He had a knack for recording and for photography; in fact it was he who shot the cover of our first album, "The Unforgettables".

CHITRA SINGH, *wife* | Jagjit and I were called for a rehearsal one day, and he asked me for a lift in the car. I invited him in for a cup of tea. When he saw the harmonium, he pulled it to him and started singing, this time it was his own compositions. They really impressed me; I thought they were great and then I forgot his ugly voice, "ugly" to me because I didn't like that kind of deep voice. After that, he used to come over. On Sundays we'd play carrom and cards with other friends; there was no romance at that time, but we all liked him – he was very gentle, shy, quiet, plus that talent for singing – though to me he was a composer first, then a singer.

In the meantime, there was discord in my marriage, it had been there for some time. Today when I look back, I can see that even then I was still a little girl; I hadn't grown up; I became a woman much later, and my husband didn't want to father me all the time. He had given me notice that he wanted a divorce, and told me that he would give me time to make a profession from singing, after which I would be on my own. Until you stand on your own feet, he said, I'll be there. I was very serious about music but so very secluded that I felt totally lost. At this point Jagjit Singh entered our lives.

MONICA CHOWDHURI, *daughter* | I remember that when I was about four years old my father was already seeing somebody else. And I knew the lady as well. I know that it caused my mother a lot of pain. By then, they had changed their relationship to something more like father and daughter or brother and sister rather than it being a real marriage.

The first time I ever saw Jagjit Singh, Papa as I call him, was at a neighbour's and I must have been about six or seven years old at that time. He was singing a Punjabi song called "Maye-ni-maye". As a little kid, I was so moved by that song, I just sat down and wept. I knew no Punjabi then, it was the purity and the intensity of his voice that touched me, there was a certain quality and ethos. Quite honestly, when I think of Papa's music I think of only that one song.

At that time, there was no connection with my mother, though she was into music herself. I didn't think anything was happening then, it was just a friendship. At that point I knew that my father wanted out of the marriage but wanted to wait till Ma got a bit settled.

CHITRA SINGH, *wife* | One day my husband came home from office with his lawyer and the divorce papers for me to sign. Foolish as it may sound, it really hit me; I was completely unprepared because I had forgotten about it. But I signed without question. I signed, it was enough that he didn't want me. He said, Now you must live separately; so Monica – my daughter from that marriage – and I moved to a small flat. We continued to record at that house, spending the days there and going home at night to sleep.

The problem was that Monica was told nothing. In her child's mind all kinds of things must have been going on. She was absolutely devoted to her father and when she realised what was happening, she was devastated.

MONICA CHOWDHURI, *daughter* | I must have been about ten years old when Ma actually moved out and we went to a new apartment. Subsequently when Jagjit Uncle (that's what I used to call him then) started coming over, I thought that was rather strange. He was over a lot more, they were getting a lot closer, and I was wondering why this was happening.

I insisted on visiting my father. But when I went I was shocked to see someone else's clothes in the cupboard, tooth brushes in the bathroom. It was really a very disturbing phase of my life, and extremely painful because not knowing is the worst thing of all.

I couldn't accept that there were other people in my parent's lives. Because when you are an only child you get more attached to your parents than when you have siblings. And the lack of knowledge certainly helps to compound the disaster in your brain.

JAGJIT SINGH | I USED TO JOKE ABOUT HOW I MET CHITRA: I USED TO TELL PEOPLE THAT I WAS WRESTLING WITH DARA SINGH WHEN HE PICKED ME UP AND DROPPED ME IN HER LAP! BUT THE TRUTH IS THAT THE FIRST TIME I MET HER WAS IN MR. DUTTA'S STUDIO, REHEARSING AND THEN RECORDING GHAZALS FOR MAHINDERJIT SINGH WHO WAS CHITRA'S GURU. THE SECOND TIME WAS WHEN RECORDING JINGLES.

JAGJIT SINGH | I have been criticised for the use of instrumentation and my approach to ghazal composition. People say, This is hardly a ghazal! *Aise thodi hota hai*! Ghazal is not like this! To which I reply, *Aap bataiye kaise hota hai?* Then tell me what a ghazal is like?

Is there some set formula for ghazal? If there is, do tell me. If you say that Begum Akhtar's was the only style of ghazal, I can't accept that. Her style reflects her milieu; that doesn't mean it is a formula for all others to follow. Before her, Barkat Ali had his own style. This is my style. What is to be seen now is who is better accepted? Whichever is widely accepted becomes, in the long run, the tradition. After all, tradition is made, not given from above. Different styles can flourish side-by-side also. And some styles flourish on nostalgia; the fans of K. L. Saigal and Begum Akhtar look only for their styles.

GULZAR, *poet* | I have said this several times, it seems as if Ghalib has bequeathed to him not just the storehouse of his writing but also the temperament of the ghazal. Understanding the form and its temperament, this is a special skill not given to all, no matter how fine a singer you are: he has that in good measure.

Ghazal is a form of brevity, so dense that a world of meaning is packed into its lines.

With Jagjit, the ghazal becomes simpler, easier, then there is the modern element in orchestration. It's not necessary to tie the ghazal to only sarangi and tabla. The world has changed, so have sounds and instruments. He knows today's sounds and how to use them creatively. Yet his music is deeply joined to raga, so it's classical and modern at the same time.

RANA SAHRI, *poet* | All types of singing have gone through stages and changes, including ghazal. The soul of the ghazal is the metre, which you can't tamper with, which Jagjit Singh has never done. Ghazal has its own discipline as a poetic form, he's never broken that. But he has experimented with its musical expression in an effort to bring it to a wider audience. The language of poetry is not always simple – it is not the local idiom of the teashop, after all – but he made the singing style so attractive that people wanted to listen and understand even the more difficult words of the poem. One thing: when the Urdu language was in decline, he rekindled interest in the language and its poetry and gifted the tongue with a new life. That's a big contribution.

Sohrab Modi's film on Mirza Ghalib, which he made in 1954 with music by Gulam Mohammed, was very popular. Should we scoff at it because the musical idiom was from the films or was orchestrated? Certainly not! It brought Ghalib to a wider audience, it's the same here. An artiste must communicate with his audience. Jagjit Singh has never tampered with the essence of the ghazal, its depth, its temperament, its standard. But he has experimented in one area: how to bring it to a wider audience, a younger generation. Here he has broken the barriers and surged ahead.

GHANSHYAM VASWANI, *singer and student of Jagjit Singh* | Earlier the style of ghazal singing was that of thumri singers, they sang ghazal like thumri, repeating the lines like the "bol-banana" of thumri. That was more classical in expression because it derived from that tradition. When the ghazal became part of films, it became more tied to music, more set, in the manner of Talat Mehmood. So the trend changed. The music structure became less complicated and got to a wider audience, yet the treatment remained sophisticated. That is exactly the advantage of Jagjit Singh's ghazals.

KARTAR SINGH, *younger brother* | There is no guideline for the soul of the ghazal, no rules. If it appeals to you, then whatever the style, traditional or modern, it is justified.

He sang Ghalib in a concert in Delhi recently. Most singers would render this in traditional style, but he sang in his way. A connoisseur remarked afterwards: Either Ghalib was born a hundred years too early or Jagjit Singh was born a hundred years too late. When he was singing this ghazal, it was as if the soul of Ghalib was hovering around, listening, adding his wah-wahs.

NIDA FAZLI, *poet* | Urdu words, their presentation, are critical to ghazal gayaki. Jagjit Singh reads Urdu in the Urdu script: I think that makes a difference. He has a Punjabi throat. In the Punjabi language, there are Persian, Arabic, Turkish words. They have the legacy of Waris Shah and Bulle Shah, all these shape the Punjabi throat. When Jagjit Singh sings, each word emerges like a blossoming bud. You never need to ask, What is he singing, as with many other singers whose music devours the words. After Mehdi Hasan, if anyone knows how to present the misra, it is Jagjit Singh.

GULZAR | I'VE NAMED HIM "GHAZALJIT SINGH". I HAVE SAID THIS SEVERAL TIMES, IT SEEMS AS IF GHALIB HAS BEQUEATHED TO HIM NOT JUST THE STOREHOUSE OF HIS WRITING BUT ALSO THE TEMPERAMENT OF THE GHAZAL.

JAGJIT SINGH | Gulzar wanted to make a serial on the poet, and asked me to do the music. The ghazals were selected according to the narrative, this ghazal for such-and-such situation. There were some in mushaira style, some in kotha style, some in faqir style. Gulzar wanted to show how Mirza Ghalib became popular. So we discussed what the situation was, and thus how the treatment should be. Over half of the songs were composed in the studio, and recorded there with the musicians.

It was a composer's challenge. Firstly, to deal with a master poet whose poetry is different. I had to understand what he was trying to say so that I could relate it to the narrative and communicate it to the audience. The singing had to be straightforward. He was a poet, not a singer, so there was no place for complicated musical taans. He would have recited his poetry, so I kept the music simple with few variations; though aesthetically I rate it highly. It is what came in a natural way, and therefore sounds effortless. I never felt that this is Jagjit Singh composing for Mirza Ghalib, so I must display my musical virtuosity. No. It should be Ghalib, Jagjit Singh should become Ghalib and sing, only then will the poetry come forth.

Another challenge was that almost every major artiste has sung Ghalib: Talat Mehmood, Begum Akhtar, Suraiya, Lata Mangeshkar, Mehdi Hasan. I wanted this version to stand out.

I used sarangi and tabla; later, for the cassette, I used modern instruments too, but not like an imposition. More than the period, I kept the flavour of the poetry in mind, and the music responds to what the poetry demands. The ghazals had to be about three minutes in length because it was a serial, so there was not much scope for musical interludes; I had to work within strict discipline and tightness.

People were interested in the serial "Mirza Ghalib" and its subject. They could understand some of the poetry, not all, and I still get letters from people telling me that they started learning Urdu after "Mirza Ghalib" – written in Urdu.

GULZAR, *poet and director of "Mirza Ghalib"* | Mirza Ghalib is Jagjit beyond Jagjit! It is a major work that he has done for my TV serial. No other composer could have achieved what he did, that's why I've named him "Ghazaljit Singh". The mood of each sequence, each bandish, was matched by his compositions. The music had to be composed for defined situations; in a way I think that was an asset because the music was part of a narrative structure, and had to be rendered in a particular way.

I was totally focused on the personality of Ghalib, the way I saw him and felt him, and why for me he tops the Urdu poets. So the serial centred around those events that give an insight into this personality. His imagery is so deeply rooted in India, in daily life. With Ghalib we share the intimacy of a beloved family elder; at each moment he offers you an apt quotation. This turn of everyday phrase is the poet's art, playing with verse as you and I would play with marbles. He did not try to be intellectual, that's what makes Ghalib, Ghalib, and that's what Jagjit renders.

MIRZA GHALIB, 1988

JAGJIT SINGH | Ghalib's verse is down-to-earth, it's also emotional. Because none of his children survived, he masked his pain with surface humour, but underneath he's philosophical. People say that he was an atheist, but some of his verses show differently. For the opening, we took this shair, "Na tha kuech to Khuda tha. Kuech na hota to Khuda hota..." *When there was nothing, there was God. If there were to be nothing, there would (still) be God...* What you call "Khuda", that's your interpretation; he's not referring to a narrow sectarian God, but to a cosmic power. There is such deep philosophy here, who can claim he's an atheist? He's very much a spiritual man!

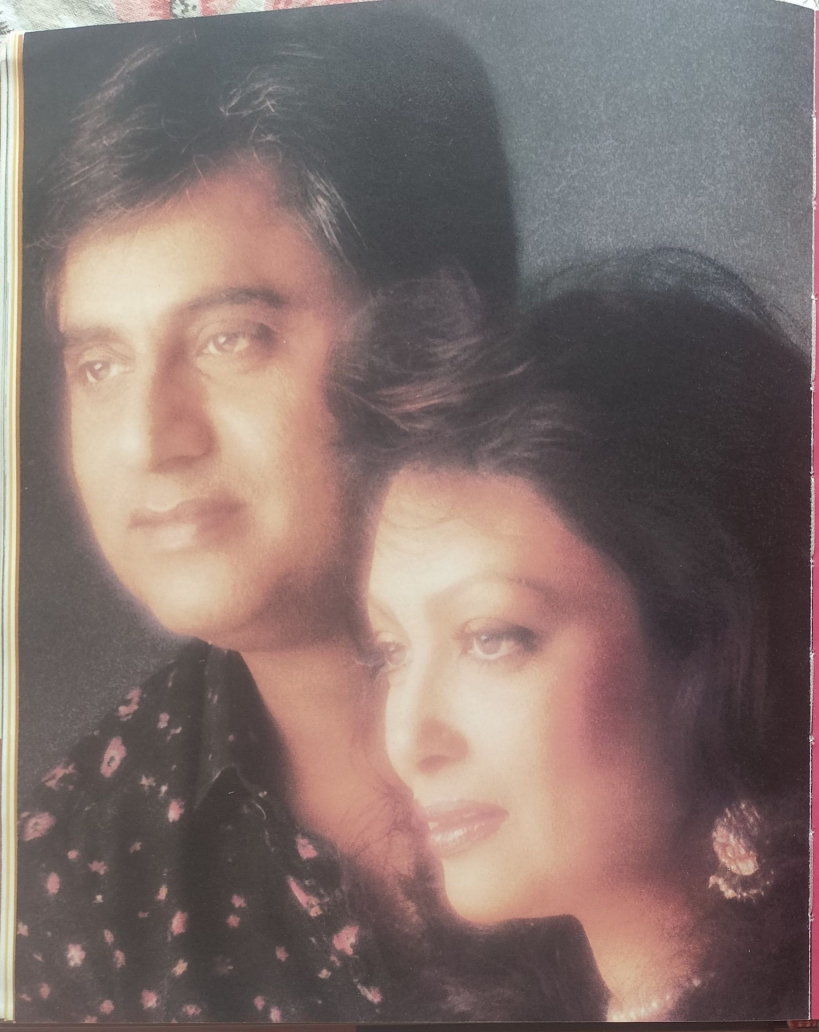
GULZAR, *poet and director of "Mirza Ghalib"* | Because it came on TV as a visual presentation, I insisted on not using any instrument that was not of that time. On one occasion, he wanted to use the rabab, saying, how can you object, the rabab was present at that time. I said, But we don't have a rabab player in this scene. But the music sounds thin, he said. So we had to place a rabab player in that scene, dressed in Pathan costume! I was strict about the music for the serial, but when it came to the album, I told Jagjit to treat it musically as he wished; though personally for me, music is never "khali" or lacking in body; silence itself, those empty spaces, are their own body.

He created a montage of five-six ghazals, a few lines from each, and each *of* different metre. I think this is a masterpiece; we have heard of ragamala, this was a ghazalmala, picturised over a scene where Ghalib is writing. Those who love music and the tradition of ghazal are proud of him for what he achieved.

JEHANGIR CHOWDHURI, *son-in-law and cinematographer* | One of the aspects most people don't know about him is his ability in visualisation. His use of visuals is very down-to-earth, he doesn't like to make them too abstract, and he prefers the direct approach, which I think he feels reflects his music.

I was doing a music video for him, a short promotion for the serial 'Mirza Ghalib'; and what he told me was to keep it simple. So we just had a silhouette of him, a semi-silhouette actually, which we interspersed with visuals from the serial. I found the approach very pure, it worked very well to complement what he had done with the music of the serial. He has a presence that is remarkable and undoubtedly his fans want him to feature in his videos in some way or other and very often The actors in the videos do not command that kind of presence at all.

DAMAN SOOD *recording director* | 'Mirza Ghalib' was Jagjit Singh's big work. All India Radio had put a ban on Jagjit's albums because he went to South Africa, which in those days was not allowed. It was a bad patch for him. Then came 'Mirza Ghalib' – and pouf! just like that it happened, he was back with a bang. Now he's like a Derby winner. He's so far ahead of everyone else that no one can catch up with him.



SAATH SAATH WITH CHITRA

1967/1975

CHITRA SINGH | MY MOTHER WAS AN ACCOMPLISHED CLASSICAL SINGER, SHE LEARNT WITH MOHAMMED HUSSAIN IN DHAKA WHEN SHE WAS A GIRL AND WITH CHINMOY LAHIRI IN CALCUTTA AFTER HER MARRIAGE. I STILL HAVE VIVID MEMORIES OF CHINMOY LAHIRI, WHO IS ALSO PARVEEN SULTANA'S GURU. HE USED TO COME TO OUR HOME, AND I'D BE SITTING AND PLAYING, AS CHILDREN DO, AND HUM AND SING WITH NO INHIBITIONS. WHEN GURUJI HEARD ME, HE TOLD MY MOTHER, SHE IS TALENTED, YOU SHOULD GET HER TRAINED.

CHITRA SINGH, *wife* | I have learnt my singing entirely by ear. I will not lie, I will not pretend, I haven't had formal musical training but I did have the ability to pick up anything. Whatever was played – Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Fayyaz Khan, Abdul Karim Khan – I could repeat that verbatim.

My mother was an accomplished classical singer, she learnt with Mohammed Hussain in Dhaka when she was a girl and with Chinmoy Lahiri in Calcutta after her marriage. I still have vivid memories of Chinmoy Lahiri, who is also Parveen Sultana's guru. He used to come to our home, and I'd be sitting and playing, as children do, and hum and sing with no inhibitions. When Guruji heard me, he told my mother, She is talented, you should get her trained.

So I went to his house to learn, first with the children's group, but then he said, That won't do, I'll have to put her with the adults. The next day I was called with the adults group. Many of them were radio singers, some had cut records. As usual, I was sitting on one side while he taught them. After a while, he asked me: *Ki re? Shunli? Ga, tu ga* – Have you heard? Now you sing.

Again, my ear had picked up everything, so I sang, and as I sang there was pandemonium. The whole group of adults felt very offended. They asked him, Have you made this child sing to slight us? That what we can't sing, is being sung by this child who sat on the sidelines and listened? He said, Nothing of the sort, she's a talented young girl, I thought you'd be happy to hear her, but what has happened is just the opposite.

That was the end of my attempt to learn. I came home and told my mother that I didn't want to go. Ever since then whatever I have sung till I stopped singing in the 90s, my performances, my albums, everything, is all through the ear.

It is much later, after my marriage to Jagjit Singh, that I felt it. He belongs to a very orthodox school which believes that music should only be acquired through hard learning, "ragad-patti". Although Bengalis are very different, very emotional kind of people, if you sing beautifully it doesn't matter whether you have learnt or not. But with him, learning and training is the main thing and if you haven't learnt then you are zero.

SANJEEV KOHLI, *son of music director, the late Madan Mohan; ex – HMV* | From my childhood memories, I remember that Jagjit Singh, solo, used to drop into our house very often. My father was a music composer, and I believe that Jagjitji looked up to him and my father was very fond of Jagjitji as a person and as a singer. Obviously he saw the talent in him that we all share today.

I remember one particular day, probably in the late 60s, early 70s – we were young and our parents never took us out for social outings – but one day, I don't know why, my father said that there was a particular evening where he wanted me to go along. It was a party of an anniversary at Princess Usha Raje's (of Gwalior). My father said, We'll leave at 8.30. At 8.00 the doorbell rang. The servant saw someone out there and said that my father was not at home, knowing that he was getting ready to go out – my father had forgotten to tell him that someone was coming. So I went to the door, and the gentleman said his name was Jagjit Singh and that Madan Mohan had asked him to come. For half-an-hour I was sitting there and chatting with him, I must have been about ten, twelve years old at that time. I then gathered that my father had asked him to come along to that party to sing for the evening, which was not much of a happening event in those days at all. Parties were held, people drank and ate, and if someone was sitting and singing in a corner he was never given any attention by anybody, unless the singer was a Begum Akhtar; she was one of the few performing artistes then.

In chatting with him, though I was quite small, I could sense that he wasn't very happy about what he was going to do that evening. In hindsight I remember that this was a man who had tremendous self-respect and he was going to sing, which he felt was not what he would like to do. But he was doing it because possibly a lot of people would get to hear him, and it was good for his career. Besides, Madan Mohan had told him, *Chal, mein logon ko tumko sunwata hun* – Come, I'll get you an audience – though it was not necessarily the ambience that even Mr. Madan Mohan should have encouraged.

And that's exactly what happened when I went there. I was probably the only person who was actually sitting and listening, while the others were busy socialising. I remember him sitting in the corner, he had the harmonium, possibly a tabla player, there wasn't even a proper mike system. He was not really on the evening's agenda, so nobody really heard him. That's my first memory of him, because I felt miserable that an artiste could be treated like that. I saw a lot of discomfort in Jagjit Singh that day to be treated that way, though certainly it was very early in his career.

I then believe that my father gave him many such opportunities for people to hear him. Maybe Jagjitji didn't really mind it. He hadn't yet been recorded and that was the only way for exposure.

JAGJIT SINGH | MY RECORDING CAREER WAS VERY, VERY SLOW IN THOSE DAYS. AROUND 1966/67 I RECORDED MY FIRST INDEPENDENT EP, THEN ANOTHER, THEN COMPOSED MUSIC FOR AN EP OF CHITRA'S. THEN THE STAGE SHOWS STARTED, FOR LION'S CLUB, AT THE TEJPAL AUDITORIUM. SLOWLY, SLOWLY, I STARTED COMING INTO THE LIMELIGHT.

CHITRA SINGH | AFTER I CAME IN CONTACT WITH JAGJIT, I LEARNED FROM LISTENING TO HIM ALSO. I ABSORBED ELEMENTS OF HIS STYLE, BECAUSE HIS STYLE SUITED MY VOICE.
BY THIS TIME, AROUND 1968, I HAD MOVED OUT OF MY HUSBAND'S FLAT IN PREPARATION FOR THE DIVORCE AND I FOUND THAT OLD FRIENDS WERE NO LONGER MY FRIENDS.
IT WAS A BITTER REALISATION. THE ONE PERSON WHO STOOD BY ME AND WAS ALWAYS BY MY SIDE WAS JAGJIT, MY FRIEND AND SUPPORTER.

CHITRA SINGH | AT THE TIME WE WENT TO AFRICA, YOU CAN SAY THAT OUR RELATIONSHIP BECAME A ROMANCE. A STRONG FRIENDSHIP. WHATEVER YOU LIKE TO CALL IT. IT WAS VERY DEEP. I DEFINITELY COULD NOT DO WITHOUT HIM.

JAGJIT SINGH | My recording career was very, very slow in those days. Around 1966/67 I recorded my first independent EP, then another, then composed music for an EP of Chitra's. Then the stage shows started, for Lion's Club, at the Tejpal Auditorium. Slowly, slowly, I started coming into the limelight. I also sang at a number of film parties, Rawail's, Raj Kapoor's, Rajinder Kumar's.

Between 1965 and 1973, I recorded three solo EPs, two with Chitra, and one Super Seven (a 20-minute format that has disappeared). I made the Super Seven with Chitra in 1973 and people liked it. After 1973, I used to send money home, not much, but whatever I could.

Most of my earnings came from live performances, mehfils, parties. These performances gave me a kind of word-of-mouth promotion, and there were times when I'd sing through the night for private music parties. The other source was jingles. Jingle singing is like a very concise form of light singing, you have a very short time in which to say something, a message in maybe ten words. I composed for jingles, and sometimes wrote the copy also.

Once during this period I was invited to go to Hong Kong to sing at a wedding. The festivities at the Hilton took about six-seven days, after which time I also took the opportunity to go to the race track for the races. I had about 100 Hong Kong dollars for betting, and had lost till I was down to 40 dollars. I split that into two separate bets for win and place at odds of 80 to 1. The horses romped home, and I won 3300 dollars, this was in addition to what I earned from the wedding. With this money, I went off to Japan, to Rajinder, my friend from the days of Churchgate and Berry's, who worked in a restaurant in Tokyo. I stayed in Japan for about a fortnight, then returned to Hong Kong, where the management of the Hilton Hotel asked me to perform for half-an-hour each day in return for a room and food – no money. So I stayed another fortnight in Hong Kong, doing private shows also after the Hilton performance was over. If anyone asked me where I was staying, I'd say casually, The Hilton – very impressive!

By the time I returned to Bombay, to the Sher-e-Punjab at Agripada, I had accumulated 700 American dollars, a tidy sum, which I kept in a purse. I arrived home at night, and the next morning found that 400 dollars were missing. I suspected one of my room mates, a known card sharper, and that evening I went to him and said, There is still money in the purse. Shamefacedly he admitted that he had taken the money but had lost all of it in gambling. But he gave me back 300 dollars. That's my Hong Kong story.

CHITRA SINGH, *wife* | I was singing on the radio when I was five years old. As a child, I was a great fan of Lata Mangeshkar's; there was a cinema house across the pond near our house, and the songs of the movies would float in the air, and I'd stand near the window to listen to them. In 1953 she came to Calcutta to do a big show, it was her first visit to the city. I told my father that I must meet her. He arranged a meeting through the chief recordist at HMV, and I went to see her. I bent down, touched her feet. Do you sing, she asked, then sing for me. I sang and sang, four songs including one Rabindra Sangeet she had asked for. The famous music director C. Ramachandra was also present and he was so impressed that he told my father: Bring her to Bombay, I'll make her a playback singer. Though I was only a little girl and my father paid no attention, that moment was a milestone in my life. People said I sounded like her. C. Ramachandra's words planted a seed in my mind, a dream of playback singing, which receded with marriage and a child. But then, no dream is ever completely forgotten.

As a girl, I took part in functions held in the para, the neighbourhood, singing and dancing in dance-dramas like Chandalika. It was during the rehearsal of one such function that Debo Prasad Dutta, who was to be my first husband, noticed me. He went home and told his parents, I want to marry her, so contact her parents and talk to them. I was the only child of my parents. To them it came like a bolt from the blue – marriage, and I was only 14! But slowly, slowly they were won over, first, with the many visits that my husband-to-be paid to the house to be with them, then with all that his parents said. Your daughter will be our daughter, they told my parents, besides, we live so close to you, you'll see her every day. In their simplicity, my parents were literally swept off their feet. They liked the boy, he was well educated and with a good job, so finally they said yes.

So I was married at a point when I didn't know what marriage was. Soon I had a child, my daughter Monica. When she was still small, my husband took a transfer to Bombay and so we came here in 1961.

Throughout this period, I was singing. Not professionally and not like a student, but along with my household chores, while cooking, while changing nappies. In those days, the closest I had got to ghazal was the music of Talat Mehmood. In Bombay we had a Gujarati neighbour, Nirmala Patel, who was very

fond of music and often had baithaks in her home: it was on her balcony that I first saw Jagjit. She had singing masters to teach her, one of whom was K. Mahavir who sang wonderfully. I started learning from him and in two-three months I had got the gist of North Indian singing and added it to my repertoire.

After I came in contact with Jagjit, I learned from listening to him also, I absorbed elements of his style, because his style suited my voice. By this time, around 1968, I had moved out of my husband's flat in preparation for the divorce and I found that old friends were no longer my friends. It was a bitter realisation. The one person who stood by me and was always by my side was Jagjit, my friend and supporter.

When I cut my first disc, it did not happen easily. I had a performance at Surshringar, a platform for new and upcoming artistes as well as established singers. There Mr. Joshi of HMV heard me and asked me to come to his office. Jagjit had by then already recorded for them, so he took me to HMV to meet him. Joshi was going to retire the following March and said that before that he would definitely cut a disc of mine despite the fact that I was unknown, an EP of four songs. Because I was unknown, I suppose they thought the disc would have a better chance with a known composer.

It so happened that Khayyam, the famous film maestro, was in great demand for many non-film albums, his work was well received. HMV asked Khayyam to do the music for me; he agreed, but wanted to meet me, so we went to see him and were very warmly received. He heard me sing, and told me, You sing well, I will definitely do your album. After that we'd call again and again. There would be a lot of pleasant conversation, many warm greetings – but no mention of work. Khayyam was hospitable, he would insist that we stay for meals, but after four-five visits there was nothing concrete and that left me with a very dissatisfied feeling. Once I asked him, When will we rehearse? It will happen, it will happen, he replied. We heard that he had kept other singers dangling. Meanwhile time was going by, and Joshi was going to retire. I decided, this won't do; so I told HMV, I don't think he will do it without a lot of time spent in to-ing and fro-ing. Joshi said, Let Jagjit compose.

So we stopped pursuing Khayyam, and went ahead with the recording, for which Jagjit had selected good songs and composed really nice music. Eventually I had the satisfaction of presenting a copy to Khayyam, something that no new artiste would have had the guts to do, and made him listen to it. It was a sweet revenge.

But I still cherished a dream of playback singing. I sang in a live performance with Mukesh. I came into contact with Kishore Kumar, who offered me an Africa tour, but for a very small amount of money. I met many music directors, people like Ravi. But most were uncomfortable with me because of my background and upbringing. Madan Mohan loved my voice and became a good friend, but he died before he could do anything for me. Jaidev was another good friend, he wanted to use me but film producers would not agree. Roshan was another music director who loved my voice, and I was all set to sing for Anokhi Raat, but his wife requested me to back off, and that was the end of that.

CHITRA SINGH | SO WE WERE MARRIED IN 1970 FOR THE GRAND SUM OF 30 RUPEES. OUR TABLA PLAYER ORGANISED THE PRIEST TO MARRY US. BHUPI (BHUPINDER SINGH, THE SINGER) CAME WITH THE GARLANDS AND A BOX OF SWEETS. AND THAT WAS IT. NO DRAMA, NO RECEPTION, NO PRESENTS. JUST TWO MINUTES, AND WE WERE MAN AND WIFE.

SANJEEV KOHLI, *son of music director, the late Madan Mohan; ex-HMV* | I don't remember too many other incidents from that time, the early 70s, because my father kept us away from music completely. He wanted us to concentrate on our studies. He had a separate music room opposite our house. I'm sure that Jagjitji and Chitraji went there often, they tell me they did.

About six, eight months before my father died, he had a serious car accident while driving from Lonavla to Bombay. It was Chitraji who informed us. I remember, and told us that Madanji had been in a terrible accident. I don't know how she got to know – I didn't know her personally at that time – but I do remember that it was she who called us.

Then when he died in 1975 they came to our house and I recall that Chitraji was visibly shaken. She was very fond of my father and I think they developed a bond between the three of them, a very musical bond.

CHITRA SINGH, *wife* | We formed our own group, called the Rainbow group. There used then to be the custom of what was called an orchestra party, a troupe with singers and musicians whose repertoire included film songs and light music. Our group was one such; the lead singer then was Peterson and the rest of us were smaller fry. In 1969 we went to Africa, to Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

CLARENCE PETERSON, *musician* | Jagjit Singh (whom I call Maharaj) came to me and said, Peter, we have a sponsor for East Africa, will you come with us? And I said, Sure. He told me to put together a group of musicians.

The Rainbow group had a variety entertainment programme. The musical repertoire was mainly film songs. I used to sing in the style of Mohammed Rafi, whom I greatly admired; I did solos and duets with Chitra. We had a compere who was also a mimicry artiste; we had a husband-and-wife duo who danced to records; and we had our musicians on accordion, saxophone, congas, tabla and so on. Jagjit Singh sang "Mere sapnon ki rani..." and it was a big hit!

We also had an adventure on this tour. We had gone to Uganda to perform at Kampala. That very night the Idi Amin revolution broke out. At 2 o'clock in the morning, the organisers came to us and said, Now pack up immediately and let's run from here! We were taken completely by surprise, but they said, We can't wait, we must leave now. We started off for Kenya. A few miles out of Kampala we were stopped by Amin's soldiers. It was very scary. The organiser who was with us told them in the local language that we were performing artistes from India, that we were not Ugandans, and that we were returning to India. For at least half-an-hour there was a discussion. Then the sponsor had to show them a poster advertising our performance to convince them. Finally they let us go – we zoomed off without daring to look back and did not rest easy until we had reached the safety of Kenya.

CHITRA SINGH, *wife* | At the time we went to Africa, you can say that our relationship became a romance, a strong friendship, whatever you like to call it. It was very deep, I definitely could not do without him. I needed him at every step, he was like my security blanket in every way. At that time he was very much there for me.

It was a very funny situation. Before marrying me, Jagjit went to Mr. Dutta to take his permission! He laughed and laughed: I have been waiting for you to do this, he said, you should have done this a long time ago.

DEBO PRASAD DUTTA, *Chitra's first husband* | No, I wasn't surprised at the attachment at all. When Chitra and I parted company, Jagjit used to look after her, and I felt safe, that a friend is looking after her, because when you part it gives rise to certain social problems. He provided the security in a household with no male member. By the time he came to meet me, we were already divorced, so she was free to marry and there was no problem.

And well before that – say five or six years – he was already like a member of the family, we were extremely familiar and extremely close, so there was nothing to feel sensitive or embarrassed about. That is why we still remain friends. Jagjit is so open-hearted, so generous that it is impossible not to be friendly with him. I think he has a unique ability to touch a chord in the heart of people. A truly, warm human being.

CHITRA SINGH, *wife* | So we were married in 1970 for the grand sum of 30 rupees. Our tabla player lived in a temple in Colaba and he organised the priest to marry us there, in that temple. Bhupi (Bhupinder Singh, the singer) came with the garlands and a box of sweets. And that was it. No drama, no reception, no presents. Just two minutes, and we were man and wife.

MONICA CHOWDHURI, *daughter* | I remember shuttling between my mother and father when mother had got together with Papa. They were very broke at that time, doing jingles for 500 rupees or whatever, but they managed somehow. My mother is a very independent person and did not want to take alimony from my father. They went through rough times, but through it all, Papa managed to keep his dreams intact. He knew some day he'd get there somehow.

CHITRA SINGH, *wife* | Our son was born in 1971. We called him Baboo, the affectionate name given to most little boys in Bengal, and although his real name was Vivek, everyone knew him as Baboo. He had blue eyes when he was born; the whole nursery was agog, such a beautiful baby!

I brought Baboo home. In those days we had very little money, our apartment had just one room, and I had to manage single-handed. But there was joy, such joy.

JAGJIT SINGH | In my life so far, I can say that there have been three defining moments, turning points, call them whatever you like. The first was in August 1971 when Baboo was born. I remember it was in the afternoon at 1.44 pm in Breach Candy Hospital. That was the height of happiness. We were not well-off then, but I felt as if I was the richest man in the world.

MONICA CHOWDHURI, *daughter* | I was in the hospital when my brother was born. He was such a beautiful baby, he was like a toy. I think I fell in love with him the very first time I saw him. Then I started being with my mother more often.

We had a very special bond, Baboo and I. He was my joy, and I think that I was pretty much his joy too.

CHITRA SINGH, *wife* | I have always been a very fastidious mother, and never liked to leave the baby with an ayah – not that we could have afforded one anyway. But I preferred to do things myself. The first time I went out to sing a jingle after Baboo was born was when he was 20 days old. We needed the money. I literally held the sleeping baby in my arms while singing into the mike. So it continued...he accompanied me anywhere that I had to go to sing, though in those days, it was only jingles for me. Very little money would come in, but 30 years ago we managed quite happily.

I remember celebrating his first birthday. We invited a few friends from our small circle, not too many – where would they have fitted in, where was the space? We had to gather up all the things from our room and put them in a tiny store to clear the room for our guests.

Our lives were centred around Baboo. I still had my daughter, Monica, but there was hardly any space! That one room contained all our activity, it was our sitting room for visitors, we ate there; at night, I'd clean up so that we could sleep in that same space. Monica was a growing girl, 12 years old by the time

MV

Baboo was born. A baby needs all the attention and caring of the mother; and that – at her age – she could not understand, so she felt neglected and unwanted. She decided to go and stay with her father. Those were the days when the mother-daughter bonding must have lapsed so much, till today we are suffering from it.

JAGJIT SINGH | Baboo went to our concerts with us. The concerts were always at night, so a little mattress would be kept behind us on the stage where he would be put to sleep.

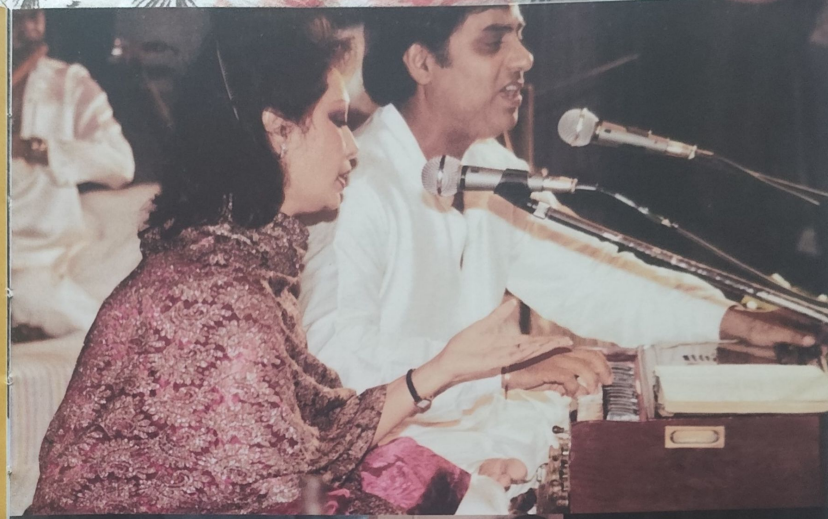
Later, he would come to recordings with us, where he saw all the musicians and their instruments, the drums, the bass, that's how he got his exposure to music.

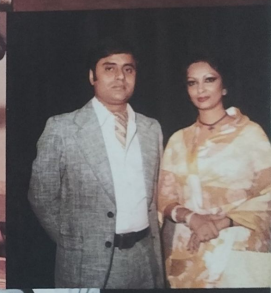
CHITRA SINGH, *wife* | Baboo filled our lives with fun, play, laughter. And music. It was inborn, it was in his blood. Even when he was small and the tabla was taller than him, he'd try to play it with his tiny hands. He could not learn formally, it was too restricting for him to be told: place the hands only here, now count the matras: he lost interest. But he was a natural player, he played on his own just by ear.

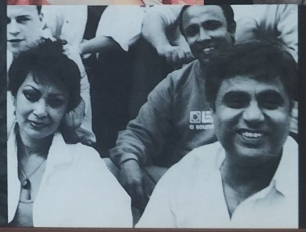
On the other hand, my first child, Monica, or Minie as everyone calls her, has always been extremely creative, imaginative and brilliant in anything she did. Despite the age difference, she and Baboo were very close; though so young, Minie looked after him like a mother.

JAGJIT SINGH | BABOO WENT TO OUR CONCERTS WITH US. THE CONCERTS WERE ALWAYS AT NIGHT, SO A LITTLE MATTRESS WOULD BE KEPT BEHIND US ON THE STAGE WHERE HE WOULD BE PUT TO SLEEP.

DEBO PRASAD DUTTA, *Chitra's first husband* | NO, I WASN'T SURPRISED AT THE ATTACHMENT AT ALL. WHEN CHITRA AND I PARTED COMPANY, JAGJIT USED TO LOOK AFTER HER, AND I FELT SAFE, THAT A FRIEND IS LOOKING AFTER HER... BY THE TIME HE CAME TO MEET ME, WE WERE ALREADY DIVORCED, SO SHE WAS FREE TO MARRY AND THERE WAS NO PROBLEM.







COMPOSITION & ORCHESTRATION

JAGJIT SINGH | The ghazal as a form of poetry is said to be the romantic talk between lovers. But I have a somewhat different interpretation. The word originates from the Arabic "gazala", meaning gazelle; and the verses have the beauty and grace of the gazelle's flight. It bounds and leaps, not always in the same direction, but the height of the leaps is always the same. So too with the ghazal. It may change thought with every couplet, but the metre won't change. Of course, others need not share this interpretation with me.

Each ghazal carries within it the seed of its own mood, its own taal. The words of the poet have an inherent rhythm and mood, and you have to uncover the taal which best suits the chhand or metre. When you do that, the composition and meaning fall into place. But first you must understand the thought. With this comes the correct construction, that is, the way the phrases and lines are to be broken; if the construction is not correct you can't compose, and neither can you recite, for you will spoil the meaning of the words.

There is a strict poetic discipline in ghazal, how it should rhyme, the rules of the qafiya and the radeef. So the compositions have to fall in line with this. When I read the poem, its outline and mood comes to my mind to suggest the basic raga. The metre is fixed – there are about four or five metres which are most often used – but it is important to understand the poetry because the composition must communicate this.

Each raga has different moods, in fact, you can say that every raga has every mood. There are no special ragas for bhakti, and when I compose bhajans, I come closer to the classical style to communicate the essence of bhakti rasa. Again, I have to think – when I read the bhajan, what comes to mind? Bhajans can be in Raga Darbari, or in Bhairavi or Bhairav. The weighty bhajans of Lord Shiva may not suit Bhairavi, so there I compose in Bhairav, or Malkauns or Darbari, the ragas characteristic of dhrupad. Meera bhajans are romantic in nature, so there the romantic aspects of raga can be brought out. Surdas has his own moods: he remained ever child-like with Krishna. And Kabir is Sufi, different yet again, so once more there is a complete shift in the compositional approach.

GULZAR, *poet* | Not many people realise how fine a composer he is – most people think of him as a singer – but I know him as a composer also. The way he takes the metre and plays with it to set the taal on it...he scans the metre so accurately that its foundation remains, no word is lost. The beauty is that he understands poetry, the significance of the verse and the weight of each word and how to present it. Because of this, he tries out different taals on the ghazal; just as you play with a ball, he plays with the poetry, that is why he is such a fine composer. That is also why he arranges his own music.

JAGJIT SINGH | In all my recordings I use certain instruments; guitar, bass guitar, vibraphone, these provide the base. After that what comes parallel to the voice is decided according to the voice I'm composing for. Should there be violin or saxophone or flute? The voice is the main instrument and should not be disturbed.

Then, one has to see the mood of the ghazal and its taal. Is it a lively ghazal in shringar rasa? If so, the percussion and rhythms are decided accordingly. If it is a serious ghazal, the tabla must have a suitable taal, or else the mood won't remain. Taals like dadra and keherwa lend themselves to shringar rasa, but then you have to see the laya (rhythm) also, if it is slow you should change the format of these taals. Then there is other percussion, like the side rhythms. When you record in stereo, you need right and left side percussions like duggi, manjira, maracas.

SUDARSHAN FAAKIR, *poet* | As he ascended the ladder of popularity and success, people criticised him for being "Western" in his musical approach and use of instruments. But Jagjit Singh is a man of conviction. He felt that the ghazal was imprisoned in the sitar, harmonium, tabla, sarangi and other such instruments. He could see that the ghazal needed much more, it needed all kinds of instruments and a new approach. He was aware of this, and he bore all the criticism, but it did not sway him from his conviction.

I wrote a song once for him in Jalandhar for a competition. The words were, "Hum sab Bharatiya hain, apni manzil ek hai..." – *We are all Indians with a common goal.*

But he didn't get the first prize because the judges felt that there was too much of the touch of Western music. Then Jagjit Singh sang the same song with the same composition at the Inter-University meet when he was in Kurukshetra University. Mr. M. C. Chagla, who was then the Minister for Education, praised the song highly, it was placed first, he said: This song should be a must in every University.

Just see where this song is today! It's an essential for the NCC (National Cadet Corps) and is even printed in their manual. And every Republic Day Parade, you'll hear them playing this song as they march past the podium. Once this song was sung by 10,000 schoolchildren for President Giani Zail Singh; it was the highlight of that programme according to the newspapers.

This was Jagjit Singh's conviction: that music should not be confined to Indian instruments only, music should be free. The very critics who had commented in the beginning later hailed him for his foresightedness; what was initially seen as faulty now became praiseworthy. To this day, he's like that, always thinking ahead.

JAGJIT SINGH | "The Unforgettables" was a defining moment in my musical career. In 1975, I was asked by Anil Sud of HMV to do an LP. To be invited to do an LP meant that you had arrived as an artiste. I started the work of selecting the ghazals and nazms for the album, taking those I knew from experience were favourites with concert audiences like "Raat bhi neend bhi kahani bhi", "Sarakti jaaye hai rukh se naqab ahista ahista" and "Baat niklegi to door talak jayegi".

The nazm "Baat niklegi", written by Kafeel Aazer, had quite a history behind it. I had earlier sent a proposal to HMV for an album in which Bhupinder Singh would sing to my compositions. The first ghazal to be recorded was "Baat niklegi". That evening I suggested he might do one or two more takes, it could be improved. He didn't like my saying that, perhaps he felt that I thought he had not sung well. The next day he went to HMV and told them that he would not continue with the project as I was not satisfied with his singing. Though I tried to mollify him, it did not work.

Around that time, I met Arjun Dev Rashk, writer of such film hits as Dil Ek Mandir and Jis Desh Mein Ganga Behti Hai. He wanted to make a film called Shasha and wanted to include "Baat niklegi"; so, since it was not being used elsewhere, I agreed and recorded it. But strange twists were about to happen. Rashk had made his brother the hero of the film; the brother wined and dined the cameraman so that the camera would stay on him; the result was that when the rushes were seen there were no shots of the poor heroine! As and when finances for the film came, the money would be spent on races or gambling – half the money was gambled away. 10 or 11 reels of the film were made, and Rashk used to go at night to Famous Studio to edit the film himself. I also went and worked on the movieola with him. I did some editing, and when he saw what I had done, he told me, From tomorrow, you'll be the director of the film!

Nothing came of it, however; bits and pieces of the film lay scattered and there were no proper records kept. That recording of "Baat niklegi" lay unused. But third time lucky! When HMV offered me the LP of "The Unforgettables", it was recorded yet again, and this time, saw the light of day.

CHITRA SINGH, *wife* | While he was doing shows, I was left at home literally holding the baby – which I was enjoying, but still I missed the music. About this time – Baboo was four years old then – HMV suggested the first LP and since Jagjitji was making the rounds alone, it was proposed for him. When he came home and told me, something happened within me, and I asked him, Why don't I sing with you? He was quite taken aback, and refused at first but I persisted. Why not, I asked. Singing is the only thing I've known, all my life I've been singing. After all, people have heard us together, they like us, I have adopted your style, so why not?

I felt a little hurt. I said, Why do you want to do this alone? Why can't I do it with you?

THE UNFORGETTABLES, 1976

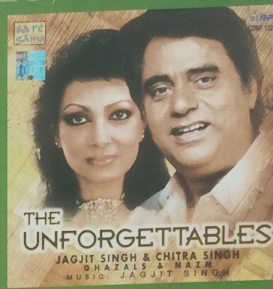
He needed some coaxing, but finally he agreed and HMV welcomed the idea.

That's how I got a little place in "The Unforgettables", our first major album. Ever since then, he's been extremely gracious to have shared his glory with me. He didn't have to. But he did.

JAGJIT SINGH | The ghazals of "The Unforgettables" were very well recorded even though we used just two tracks. I used modern instruments, so the sound was very different to what people were used to hearing in the ghazals of, say, Begum Akhtar. That was the traditional style of sarangi and tabla with open and improvised singing. My composition concept was that of a disciplined and delineated song tied to its music, with a set introduction, mukhda, interlude. Its shape was that of a film song, yet it was not. So a non-film album sounded a bit like a film album, which made it easier to understand; and I also chose lyrics that were not too difficult or abstract.

My orchestral inspiration came from Khayyam, but I took it further, using double bass to give body, as well as guitar, piano, saxophone, organ. I also featured sarangi and sitar. This was mixed to create a fresh modern sound and had its impact: it was a new approach to a ghazal album.

Plus there was the album cover, which helped the sales in no small measure. The cover design was a collaboration between Chitra, myself and Mr. Dutta, her first husband. On the cover people saw a modern picture of a modern couple whom they could identify with; it had its appeal for youth as well; all this, added to the lyrics and music, made "The Unforgettables" a hit beyond our expectations. And as people listened to the album, I started getting more programmes from further away, from places like Ranchi and Patna.



When I saw the response to the album, I realised that the audience prefers easier ghazals; also that on every album there should be one or two songs that are suitable for stage concerts.

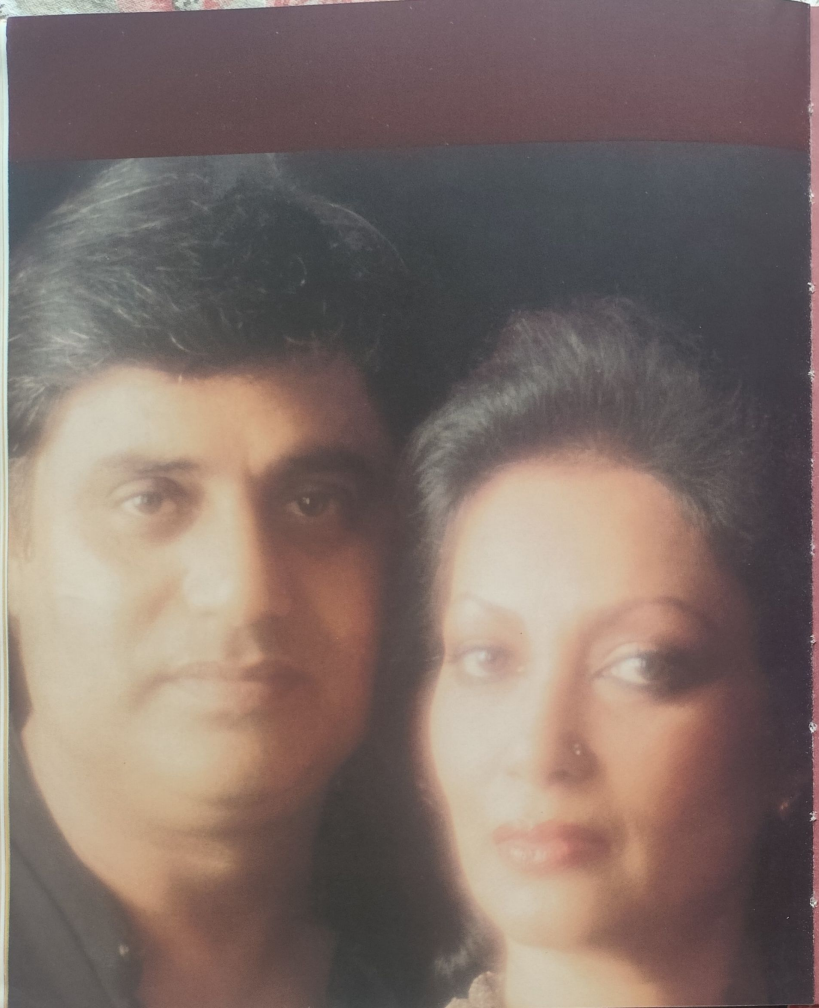
SANJEEV KOHLI, *son of music director, the late Madan Mohan; ex-HMV* | After my father died in 1975 I had to make my way in the world. I had got admission to IIM Calcutta. In Calcutta, there was a Music Room with two or three audio systems where you could hear LPs, the format of those days. Every evening I'd pass by the Music Room, and overhear a particular album very often. It was not a film album – but it was so haunting!

One day I went in to ask what it was. It was "The Unforgettables". It was a prophetic title.

I couldn't believe that a non-film album could be so popular that it would be played every evening by somebody or the other. I sat and heard it, and put it on a cassette for myself. I heard it over and over again. It made a deep impression on me; you could say it was a turning point in my life.

KARTAR SINGH, *younger brother*

"The Unforgettables" brought Veerji and Bhabhiji to national attention. I liked the album very much, and looked for its reviews which I cut out and kept – in Dharmyug, written by Surinder Singhji of the famous Singh Bandhu, in Star and Style, which was very big then, in Screen. There used to be a programme on radio which featured, among other items, ghazal. After "The Unforgettables" was released, at least one of its ten tracks would be played daily, either "Baat Niklegi" or "Sarakti jaaye hai" or "Raat bhi, neend bhi, kahani bhi. I like "Baat Niklegi" because of its simplicity of thought and its musical visualisation. His biggest strength is that whatever he sings, he sings with such descriptive power that if he sings ghungroo bajne lage, he makes you hear the ghungroos. He does justice to the poetry of the poet, whatever the poet wants to say, he expresses that musically, more than any other singer. This can only come if you have really understood the words of the poet, his thought, and how to translate that into music and communicate that to people. Though the impress of Mehdi Hasan was there he slowly and surely developed his own style.



THE UNFORGETTABLES & AFTER

1976-1986

JAGJIT SINGH | We recorded "The Unforgettables", handed over the master, and went off to Kuwait at the invitation of Sheikh Abdul Razaq. We went in March 1976, before the album's release, so it came out in our absence though we got news of its release.

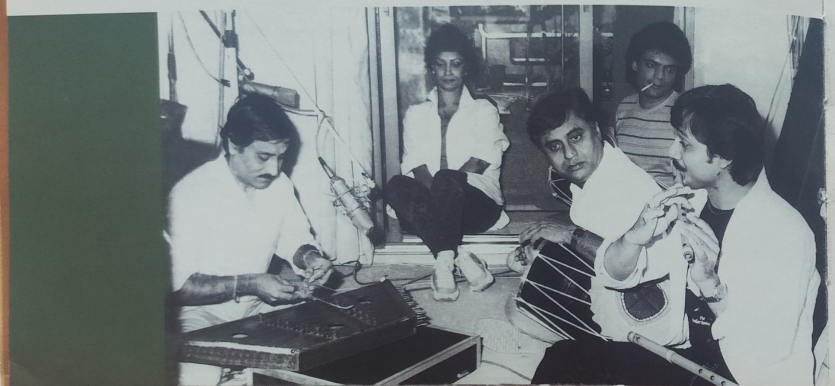
From Kuwait we went to Dubai for more programmes, then decided we wanted a holiday. From there we went to London via Frankfurt, all of us, Chitra, Monica, Baboo and myself. We had gone from the heat of Dubai, with our summer clothes; now we had to buy clothes for the European climate. We went on to London, where our friend from Dubai had booked us into the Holiday Inn, but we had to move as it was beyond our budget. We stayed with a family in Hounslow.

Now we had to market ourselves, but how? We started with the local gurdwara, after which somebody arranged a concert in a small hall for 150 pounds. In this way, we did programmes in London, small house concerts, until someone suggested that we go to East Africa. So we went off to Nairobi and performed in programmes there. In this manner, we were out of India for six months. You can say that it was a tour, but it was not organised, much that happened was ad hoc.

When we returned to Bombay, Jimmy Narula said to me, Your LP, "The Unforgettables", is a hit. A cheque for Rs. 80,000 was handed to us; it was a lot of money then, and it financed the purchase of our flat.

SANJEEV KOHLI, *son of music director, the late Madan Mohan; ex-HMV* | On my father's anniversary we as a family decided to have a get-together, a music evening for people to remember him through someone else's music, not his own. Lataji told us the best way to do it: *Ek ladka hai*, she said, *Madanji bahut uski tareef karte the. Maine suna bahut accha gata hai, uski evening rakhenge* – There's a young singer of whom Madanji used to speak very highly; I hear that he sings very well. Let's have an evening of his music.

So on that anniversary, we organised an evening at the CCI Club where Jagjitji and Chitraji were to sing. Of course they were not charging anything at all. We had invited about 150-200 people, friends, family, industry members, Lataji was there, so was Suraiya, and I think, Ashaji. It was probably one of Jagjitji's first big mehfils. He arrived on the music scene after the album, "The Unforgettables", but that was still happening. That evening, everybody was dazzled by his singing. He was absolutely brilliant.



For me, it was my first exposure to a proper concert. I had been to Begum Akhtar evenings, but all at people's homes. At last I heard music in a proper hall, with a proper sound system, and it was fascinating for me. I was in my growing years. Music was something I appreciated but had not imbibed like this. Actually, Jagjit Singh was the beginning of my ability to start responding to live performances.

And I remember this: every time he'd sing a ghazal, he'd say, I've based this on "Nainon mein badara chhaye"...Or, I've based this on "Mai ri mein kase kahoon peer"... and he'd actually explain that and say, Listen to these notes. He chose to make the evening in memory of Mr. Madan Mohan rather than tom-tom his own talent and try to impress people. I loved that, that in such a gathering of musical personalities and with such a platform, he chose not to market himself.

JAGJIT SINGH | After "The Unforgettables" things started moving. The next album I suggested to HMV was a Punjabi one of Shiv Kumar Batalvi's poems, including such poems as "Shikra", which I felt would be a hit in the north. They agreed, and the album cover had a painted portrait of Batalvi done by Imroze, the friend of Amrita Pritam. This was "Birha da Sultan".

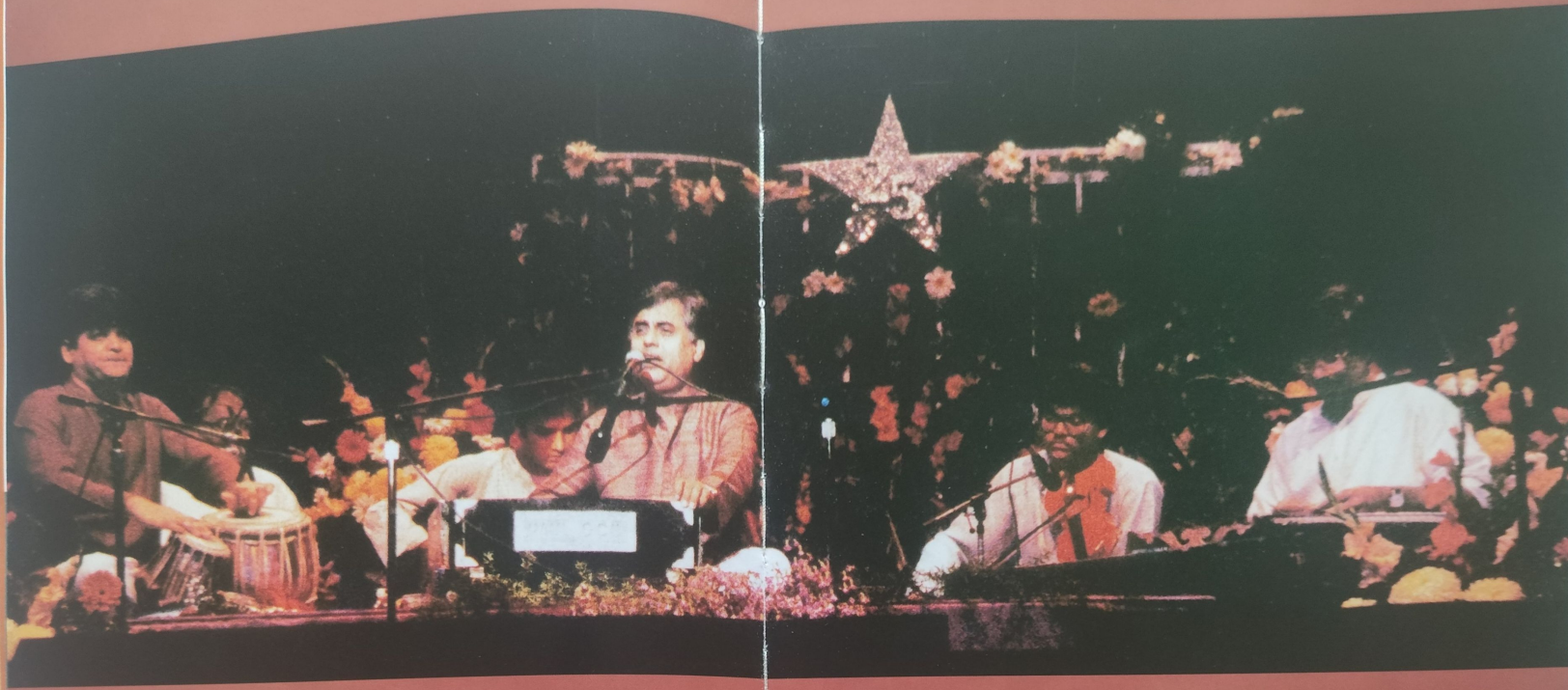
After that HMV asked for a double album, the first ever for a ghazal recording, so we did "Come Alive" where – although it was a studio recording – we created the ambience of a live concert by adding effects like audience participation and applause. This too was a hit, as "The Unforgettables" and "Birha da Sultan" had been.

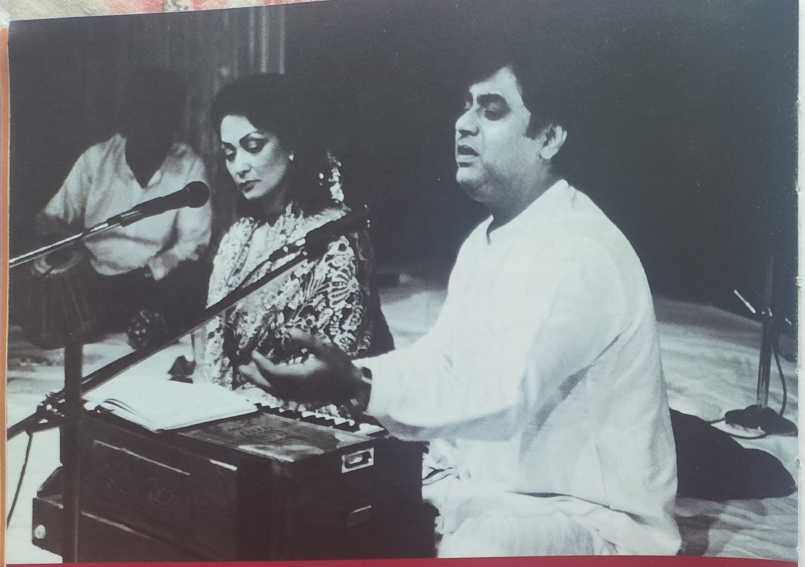
SANJEEV KOHLI, *son of music director, the late Madan Mohan; ex-HMV* | After I heard "The Unforgettables", I associated so much more with him without really knowing him. At that time, I was not in contact with him, I didn't know him at all. In the void my father left behind in me as a son, a young and impressionable son, who was not so sensitive to his father's music during his lifetime, and grew to appreciate his father's work much more only after he died, I found something akin in Jagjit Singh's music. That was what drew me closer to him. He created a turning point in my life.

I had joined Polydor (later Music India, then Polygram) in 1979 in the Artistes and Repertoire(A&R) Department, where I was told to create non-film music albums. By this time, ghazals had become very big – and here I was, son of Madan Mohan, the Ghazal King. As my father's son, I had to do something for ghazal. If I couldn't get Jagjit and Chitra Singh because they were under contract to another company, I had to do something else.

It was a defining moment not only for me personally but also for the ghazal world. I took it upon myself to find other artistes, like Talat Aziz, Anup Jalota, Pankaj Udhas. They were the creations of a combination of needs: the need to fill the void caused by not having Jagjit and Chitra Singh with us; and the need to fuel the ghazal hunger sparked by Jagjitji which his own output could not satisfy. Jagjit Singh started the ghazal wave, but we followed it up in Polydor with a host of new artistes.

JAGJIT SINGH | Our first proper tour of England was organised in 1979 by Pran Gohil, who was an associate of and dealer for Polydor. He had booked the Wembley Conference Centre with a capacity of 2400 for two nights, Saturday and Sunday. I was not very confident of selling so many seats, but he was prepared, he was quite aware that my albums were selling well. The concerts were a sell-out, and a few more were organised. He got a mobile studio to record the concert and released this as a double album, "Live at Wembley" – this time genuinely live!—which did very well. He had the foreign rights and HMV held the Indian rights since I was under contract to them.





CHITRA SINGH | I HAD ADAPTED HIS STYLE, IT WENT INTO MY BLOODSTREAM. I WAS IN LOVE WITH THE MAN AND HIS MUSIC AT THE SAME TIME. SINGING WITH HIM WAS BEING WITH HIM, EXPRESSING MYSELF WITH HIM; IT WAS A GREAT PLEASURE TO DO SUCH WORK, SO CLOSE TO MY HEART.

CHITRA SINGH, *wife* | By this time, I had adapted his style, it went into my bloodstream. I was in love with the man and his music at the same time. Singing with him was being with him, expressing myself with him; it was a great pleasure to do such work, so close to my heart.

Then our touring started all over the world. I liked the success, I liked the style I now had, though it was not what I had sung earlier. But it was still not my dream of playback singing. Not that I was frustrated, no. Because so many have told me that what I did sing was in many ways superior. But the fact remains that my singing career was not the one that I had dreamed of as a child.

JAGJIT SINGH | In 1982, I got an offer for concerts at the Royal Albert Hall in London. There were two scheduled performances on consecutive nights in this hall with 6000 seats, and the tickets sold out in three hours. This time, I got and paid for the recording, it cost me 3000 pounds. I released the album, "Live at the Royal Albert Hall", through a distributor in London, but realised that you should not do too many live albums, maybe once in ten years, because requests cause the same popular numbers to be featured again and again, and the same numbers appear.

Thereafter we went regularly to London, every one-two years, for shows and private concerts.

Our tours together – and later mine solo, after Chitra stopped singing – took us to USA and Canada as well. The first time we went was in 1978, when we went to New York and the areas around. An organisation invited us to Toronto also. In 1980, we went again to USA for a series of concerts, 24 in all. After USA, we were invited to the West Indies, to Trinidad and Tobago where we gave 14 concerts. The response was amazing. Our organiser had prepared the ground for our visit by having our songs aired on radio. On one occasion we toured the entire USA from coast to coast, travelling by van. But the maximum number of concerts I performed was in 1997, 42 concerts in two and a half months.

CHITRA SINGH, *wife* | When Baboo was young we used to arrange our tours in such a way that they coincided with his school vacations, April to June. He must have seen half the world with us! Our holidays together were combined with our tours. His fifth birthday was celebrated in England where we had gone after the completion of "The Unforgettables". Then we went on to East Africa.

In Nairobi he broke his right arm while swinging from a gate. Would you believe it, this is so strange, two-three years later when we went back to East Africa (Tanzania this time), he broke the very same arm again. This time he was playing a game jumping from one pile of cushions to another when he slipped and fell on his elbow. And again in Bombay he injured his hand. One day the doorbell rang and when I opened the door, there he was being held up by his friends with his right hand hanging. We rushed to hospital, where we found out that he had fallen while playing in a construction site. He had a racquet in his hand, and as he fell, the racquet broke and its sharp pointed wooden edges had gone into his hand. All the ligaments were torn, and 75 stitches had to be put in. I often wondered whether this hand and arm were jinxed.

His interest in music remained tremendous. As he grew older he would listen to his Papa with a critical ear, and was very frank about expressing his likes and dislikes. This isn't sounding right, Papa, he would say. *Yeh jamaa nahi, isko theek karo*, improve it.

What was striking about Baboo was that he had a strange nobility which is rarely seen in any small child. If you give a child chocolates or sweets, he'll first put one into his own mouth – but Baboo would always go around offering to others first. We never taught him

this. He was just naturally wise and mature beyond his years. As he started growing, we realised how popular he was with his friends. Without him, the others would not start playing, would not form their teams. He was such a leader. Gentle, soft, coaxing; nevertheless, he had that leadership.

KARTAR SINGH, *younger brother* | I was very close to Baboo, we were friends rather than uncle and nephew. Once, when we was about 13-14 years old he came to stay with us. In the days before TV became so widespread it was our family custom to sit together and talk after dinner. My father would recount his early experiences or tell us episodes from his life. That evening he started his story, but stopped halfway, saying, It's late, now go to bed. But Baboo would not let him go, he insisted that he complete the story, which was about Father's days of struggle and how he finally got a job. That night, Baboo heard the full account and it was almost midnight when we went to bed. His grandfather's words had a deep impact on the boy. How hard Dadaji's life has been! he said. Yes, I replied, what we are today is because of him. He pondered over what his grandfather had said for a long time after that.

JAGJIT SINGH | In the early 80s I went through the second turning point or defining moment of my life. Because I had sung in South Africa, I was banned from All India Radio; and I was raided by the Income Tax authorities. That left a very bitter taste. I had nothing to deserve the raid, no juggling of accounts or wrongdoing. A person like me is left shaken by such things, it is a black mark.

But when I analyse this event, maybe it was a blessing in disguise. It forced me to revamp my tax system – which was a bit haywire in those days – and become particular about filing returns and timely payment of taxes. And as far as the AIR ban was concerned, although the radio ban made no difference, I still felt I had to compensate by taking on more live concerts, which I did: I felt I must make extra efforts. When the ban was removed and they called us to sing, then we banned them! No, we said, we won't sing!

CHITRA SINGH, *wife* | From 1969 to 1990, we had over two decades of performing together, a prolific period. But for myself, I much prefer recording. I'm a very private person, and I can't handle crowds, though he is very good at it. Crowds make me nervous; in big concerts, with thousands of people staring at you, at your face, I used to get tense. It was only after the first or second song that the music transcended the surroundings and I could get lost in the song; after that, there was only him and me. Maybe I sound arrogant, but the fan following meant nothing to me, because it was the music I was enjoying and I sang for my own satisfaction. Even today, if I return to singing, I will never go back to public singing.

SANJEEV KOHLI, *son of music director, the late Madan Mohan; ex-HMV* | In 1984 I joined HMV.

I was very enthusiastic about working with Jagjit and Chitra Singh. For example, I wanted to have release functions because it was the order of the day. Jagjit and Chitra Singh didn't want to sing only for the press. Maybe they were right, as senior artistes they marketed themselves very selectively and in a charismatic manner. That succeeded, and in the long run, led to their remarkable durability on the music scene.

Then we started something completely different, and the suggestion came from Jagjitji. People would come to him to ask for concerts, and he suggested that we launch the albums at these concerts. I will sing for the public, he said; and if you want to call the press, I don't mind. We started a series of concerts, some in hotels which was a different ambience of mehfils, and some in auditoriums. We had a Ghazals Fan Club, where the late Ramesh Mehra would have Jagjit Singh concerts twice a year. We'd time the concerts with an album release. So if the album was called "Ecstasies", the concert too was named Ecstasies; we'd release the album there and it would sell there and in a few minutes would be sold out. It was a euphoria sustained by the ghazal wave.

Maybe I could claim that that I persuaded Jagjit and Chitra Singh to face the fact that marketing had started playing a role in the music business! – and they enlightened me that the marketing of artistes should be unique to their style, their following, their "positioning".

RAMAN KUMAR, *film and TV writer-director* | From the day I heard "Shikra", Shiv Kumar Batalvi's poem, sung by Jagjit Singh, his voice haunted me. When, shortly after graduating from FTII, I set out to make my first film, his was the voice I wanted, his and Chitra's; but by this time – in 1980 – some years had passed and now they were big stars. NFDC was financing the film Saath Saath, and the budgets were not big. Rather hesitatingly I told him this, and his reply was: Have I asked you for money?

From that day till the music for the film was completed, we almost lived togther, all of us involved. I used then to stay with Javed Akhtar, who was on the verge of splitting with Salim after one of the most dazzling collaborations in Bombay cinema. Javed was then better-known as a screenplay writer rather than as a poet; but his style was poetic, and he wrote the lyrics for the songs.

The three of us, Javed, Jagjit and I, would meet at Javed's for discussions. Jagjit was the busiest among us, so would meet us as and when he was able to. Javed was reincarnating his artistry and so was relatively free. And what discussions we used to have! Javed and Jagjit both enjoyed their drink; I, a teetotaller, would get intoxicated by the sparkle of the conversations. The sessions would go late into the night, into the early morning, till 3 or 4 o'clock. That's when the songs were penned – like "Yeh tera ghar, yeh mera ghar" – then we began the recording. First, the musicians would record the basic tracks. Then

Jagjit would dub his voice, and Javed would change a word, two words, a line, so the dubbing would take place again. I can say that the music of Saath Saath was not being created, it was being lived!

Four-five months went by and the work continued between us and Kuldip Singh, the music director. Some days I had no money, not even for food. I'd ask: Who paid for the food today? and would find out it was Jagjit Singh. I don't even know what our final bill with the studio was. When I received money from NFDC, I'd pay whatever I could to Western Outdoor, where the songs were recorded, but I'm sure that our bills must have been much more, and that Jagjit footed them.

The music for Saath Saath was a hit, and "Yeh tera ghar, yeh mera ghar" became very popular. It so happened that this film and Arth (by director Mahesh

Bhatt) were made at around the same time. At that time also Javed's friendship with Shabana Azmi was blossoming, and he wanted her to hear the song, so he took it to the Azmi home. There Kaifi saheb also heard it. By chance, Mahesh Bhatt went to Kaifi saheb the very next day for lyrics for Arth. The song he asked Kaifi saheb to write revolved around a situation where Shabana (who had a lead role in the film) has a new house. Kaifi saheb refused, saying, Mahesh, you have to change the situation. Why, asked Mahesh Bhatt. Because, replied Kaifi saheb, yesterday I heard a song in a similar situation which was written by Javed and sung by Jagjit and Chitra Singh. There can't be a better song than that, so it's better that you change – and he did.

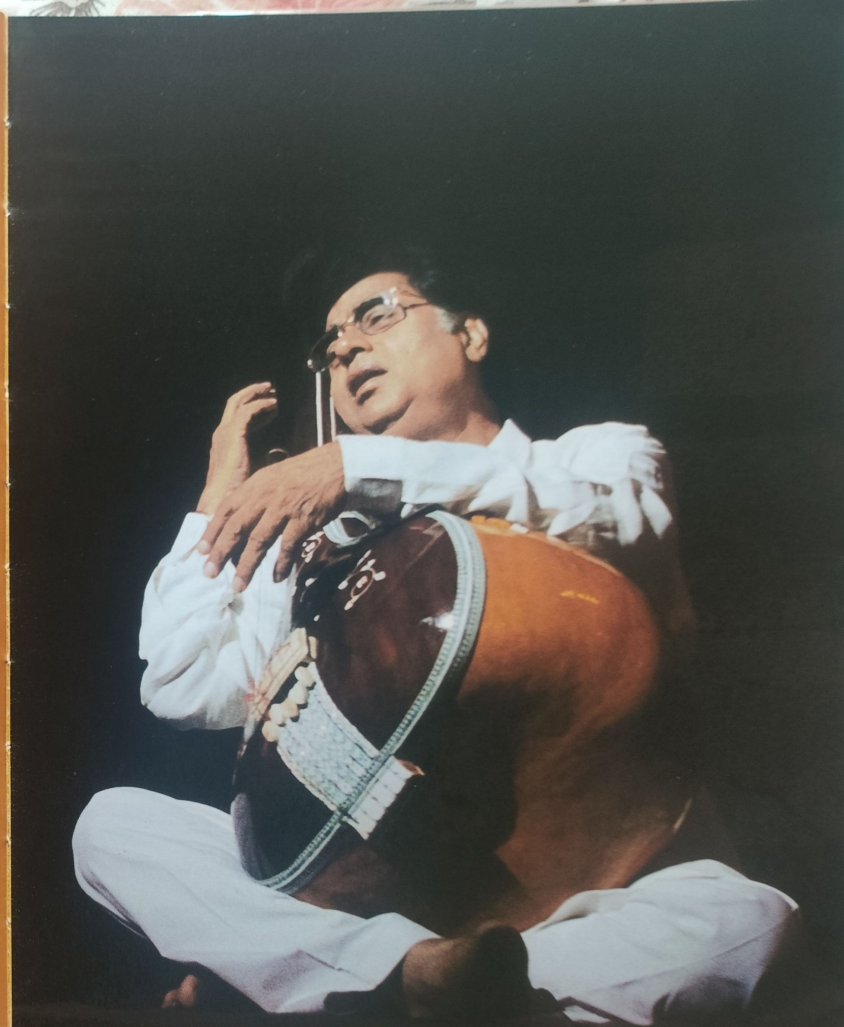
The music for Saath Saath created history, and that song remains a favourite to this day.

SANJEEV KOHLI, *son of music director, the late Madan Mohan; ex-HMV* | Saath Saath and Arth came out almost together. Even now for HMV, Saath Saath and Arth is one of the highest selling combination cassettes ever. It's bought not only by Jagjit Singh fans but by film music buyers also, otherwise you can't get those kinds of volumes.

Ghazal albums are priced much, much higher than film music and go to a selective niche audience. It was possible for a very successful ghazal album to sell one million, but the numbers are different for film where a popular track could easily sell over 10 million. If you can go beyond that one million, then someone else is buying you as well. And that cross-over audience you're reaching is the film music buyer, who doesn't particularly listen to ghazal.

With the Saath Saath and Arth combination, Jagjit Singh made that cross-over and increased his own audience.

DAMAN SOOD, *recording director* | HE IS SO AWARE THAT IF HE IS SINGING AND SOME LINE GOES AMISS, HE'LL SING THAT LINE AGAIN SO THAT IT CAN BE CUT AND PASTED IN EDITING. SO EVEN WHILE HE'S PERFORMING, HE'S THINKING AHEAD, TO THE ULTIMATE PRODUCT, THE ALBUM – HOW MANY ARTISTES HAVE SUCH FORESIGHT?



A SOUND INTEREST

JAGJIT SINGH | I have always been interested in the aspect of the sound of an album, right from the days of "The Unforgettables". Maybe even before, from my jingle days. In jingles, you learn about emphasis and background, where the stress is laid, as for example in the product name. Within that short span of 30 seconds, there has to be overall clarity and balance between the voice, the music, the spoken word.

My interest is that the album should sound good. It is a fine judgement of the ear gained from experience. You learn to listen for the frequencies, is there too much heiss, too much bass? Is there anything suppressed that should not be? In my opinion, every musician should be aware of these aspects. Where and how to place sound effects like reverb or echo: even these have to be used judiciously and only where suitable.

Ultimately, the album is my baby. If there is any problem in the sound, they will not blame the recordist or the label, they'll blame me. If the credit comes to me, so does the criticism. That's why I remain involved from start to finish. I think I should know what is happening in each aspect of the album. I am present for each musical dub, for if I leave it to anyone else, it may not happen as I require or to my standard.

90% of the real composing happens in the studio, even if the basic composition has been prepared. This could change in the studio. The instrumentation could change, the music arrangement could change, if there are too many chord changes, these could be evened out for smoothness. Sometimes, even after recording and at the stage of mixing, if I feel something is not right, it is re-dubbed. The listener must get pleasure from listening, and my experience is directed towards this objective.

SUDARSHAN FAAKIR, *poet* | He is well-versed with recording machines. And when, after listening to the recording, if his shoulders hunch up and his neck droops down, I know (even if he doesn't) that some new idea has entered his mind and that a change is about to take place. Then he goes very quietly into the main studio and draws the harmonium to him. What emerges from this is a fresh approach where you can say, Aha, yes, *this* is Jagjit Singh!

He is not easily satisfied with anything. After a recording, others will be full of praise, It's very good, they'll say. But the next day he is back in the studio re-recording the very same song. He is a perfectionist.

JAGJIT SINGH | My quest for perfection comes from the fact that whatever you record becomes like a measuring scale. You can't change it later, it lasts for decades, it will be around even after 50 years. An album, once released, remains for all time. So why not correct it or make it better when it is in your hands? You may call this perfectionism or whatever, but I know that my music is being registered and I hope that it will be an example for future students.

DAMAN SOOD, *recording director* | Technically, he's very, very good – and very aware and involved. He knows complete editing. I have learned a lot from him. His album, "Live at The Royal Albert Hall", was recorded and mixed in England. He brought the tapes for editing to me – so many tapes, a three-hour concert had to be made into a double album of 80 minutes. He sat with me for the edit; he'd pick up a beat from one place and insert it into another. Such things go beyond technical finesse, they require the wholehearted involvement of the music director.

He is so aware that if he is singing and some line goes amiss, he'll sing that line again so that it can be cut and pasted in editing. So even while he's performing, he's thinking ahead, to the ultimate product, the album – how many artistes have such foresight?

To him, each song is a different song, to be treated differently, whereas we think that each song should sound like Jagjit Singh. But he doesn't always want to sound the same – when he wants a young voice, he cuts the bass of his voice and compensates by increasing the bass in the tabla or dholak so that the ear doesn't feel the lower registers are missing. He is so clever that he keeps tracks that have been recorded but not used so that he can use them later, then he'll fit another tune or lyric on to them. He'll listen to the chords, to the original tune to recollect which raga he'd based it in, and see how to fit another raga in its place, he's an expert in that. See, it's very simple, he'll say, playing on the piano as he changes Raga Bhairavi to Raga Pahadi. But of course it's not, only he can do it because he's an Ustad, a master.

JAGJIT SINGH | MY QUEST FOR PERFECTION COMES FROM THE FACT THAT WHATEVER YOU RECORD BECOMES LIKE A MEASURING SCALE.

BEYOND TIME, 1987

JAGJIT SINGH | "Beyond Time" was an album that I did in a new kind of sound. The digital sound wave was sweeping the world, but it had not come to India yet and I thought I should do an album in this kind of sound. I did not approach a record label, because I was going on a concert tour to England, and thought I would put its proceeds into the recording. I had taken five musicans with me for the concerts, and after the tour, we were going to retreat to Jacob Studio, a residential studio about 50 miles from London which I had booked for 15 days, where we would stay and record. It was a small studio, but well organised, where you could record and mix as well, and where we didn't have to worry about timings, since the engineers were available when we wanted.

At this point Sanjeev Kohli of HMV came in, and said that his company would underwrite the cost of the album, so they took over the entire project: they wanted this album.

We recorded 12-14 ghazals between Chitra and myself, this was the first purely digital CD album by any Indian artiste to bear the DDD label, which means it has been recorded, mixed and mastered entirely digitally.

I brought the mixed master from London and listened to it here, but then I felt that something was wrong. The engineers there are Western, with their own ideas of sound; their approach is to keep the voice level low. Our engineers understand that, in ghazal, the words are important and should be heard. So I went to London again, and recalled the files from the computer so that I could mix it again to my standard. Each song was re-balanced. When it was released, it was a totally different experience. It is still quoted as an example amongst industry professionals. Sound engineers like Roger Drego use the CD as a reference when they balance the sound for a concert of Indian music.

DAMAN SOOD, *recording director* | "Beyond Time" was his first digitally recorded album, in those days, digital was considered very advanced. The songs for the CD were recorded in London, 70 minutes total. But for the cassette he needed 90 minutes of music, so another two songs were required. He came to me and said, Daman, I have to record a few more songs. I said, But how will I match this beautiful digital recording? I don't know if I can do it. He replied, You can do anything you want if you just apply yourself. You don't want to do it, so you are closed to it. But if you try you can make it happen. I asked him, How? Just listen to my voice, he said, and you'll be able to do it.

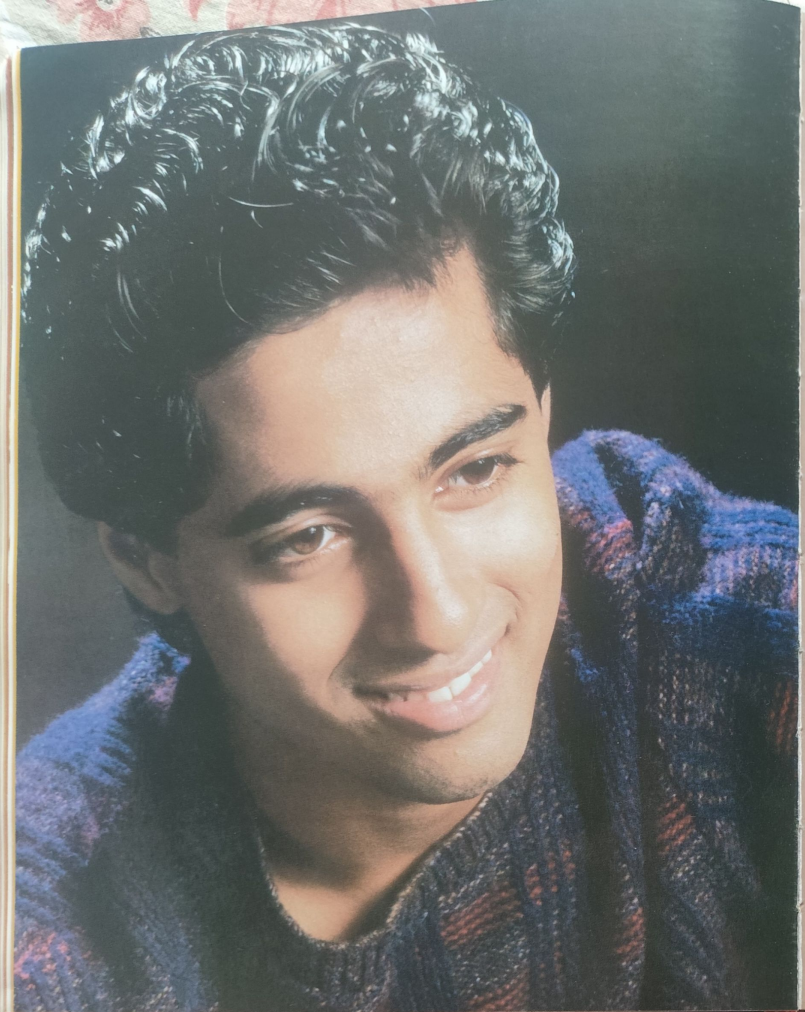
He was right, the voice is the main thing. So, using his voice from the London recording as a reference for sound, we recorded in Bombay as close to that as possible. Today if you listen to the cassette, you can't tell that those songs were recorded in India. That is Jagjit, he is persistent, his attitude is: you can do it, we can do it.

SANJEEV KOHLI, *son of music director, the late Madan Mohan; ex-HMV* | In the late 80s, CDs had become the order of the day abroad but not as yet in India. Jagjit Singh came up with the idea of doing a digital recording for a digital format, and given the expense and the fact of recording in England, and HMV's financial crisis in those days, I had to go all the way to the top to clear it. As always, Jagjitji called the shots. He chose the studio we were to record in; by then he was so good technically. He's the only artiste who composes, who arranges, who records, in addition to singing. So he knows exactly what he wants. The entire troupe, including the musicians, lived there, and we could record at any time of day or night based on "mood" since the engineers lived there as well! Of course each day was costing a lot and I had been given a budget ceiling – so I was constantly working in the hope that everybody's "mood" was right! In about ten days in the studio we had completed the recording, which was for a CD, around 70 minutes.

Then the length for cassette became a commercial decision in view of the fact that ghazals were riding so high. When it came to cassettes, the popular format for India, if we'd had a single cassette, we would have had to drop two songs. Instead, it was decided to make this a double cassette by adding songs. By this time, we had all returned to India. There was no question of going back to England complete with the team of musicians to record the extra songs, so they were recorded in Bombay. They were added on for cassette only, not on the CD.

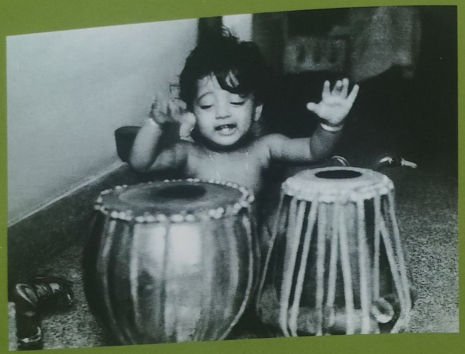
"Beyond Time" had a very memorable release function. The ghazal artistes, greats like Talat Mehmood, were all there. It was a moment not only for Jagjit and Chitra Singh, but for ghazals as a whole because so much money had gone into the recording and production of a ghazal album. Everyone benefits in such situations, so everyone was there to support us.

But releasing a Jagjit and Chitra Singh album was always a fanfare for me. Much more went into the final release because of their intense participation in every aspect. Chitraji was very finicky about the designs for the album; and the "Beyond Time" cover took us some three months to design, she was so particular about what she wanted. That involvement helped, it added a stamp of class to the look of the jacket.



TRIUMPH & TRAGEDY

1987-1996



JAGJIT SINGH | AFTER HIS DEATH, I STOPPED SINGING COMPLETELY FOR ONE MONTH, AND IT WAS SIX MONTHS BEFORE I COULD GIVE A CONCERT. BUT AFTER THOSE FIRST WEEKS, I TOOK UP MY TANPURA AND BEGAN MY RIYAZ, I THOUGHT, YOU HAVE TO LIVE NOW, THIS IS PART OF LIFE, YOU HAVE TO GO ON. I FELT, I MUST NOT LET WHAT HAD HAPPENED BECOME A WEAKNESS TO CRUSH ME, INSTEAD I SHOULD TURN IT INTO A STRENGTH. IN SOME QUARTERS IT WAS SAID THAT I WAS FINISHED, THESE RUMOURS REACHED ME, AND MADE ME EVEN MORE DETERMINED.

CHITRA SINGH, *wife* | Baboo was my confidante, my adviser, my guide. Strange words from a mother about her young son, but he had a wisdom beyond his years. He just knew what was right.

When we acquired a larger flat with more rooms and my parents moved in with us, Baboo used to look after them. If I was in town in a recording and couldn't come home to give them food, Baboo would go into the kitchen and heat their meal. When I lost my father and my mother was all alone, it was Baboo who took complete charge, going with her to the doctor. He was 15-16 years old at that time.

In 1987 he came with us to America. He had been there before, but this time – out of the blue – he asked if he could stay back. Unthinkable! How could he stay back, we had never been without him before. Despite my inner turmoil I agreed. Our friends, the Kapoors, just loved the idea of having Baboo with them. We'll organise the school, they said, and he can stay with us. That one year was a wonderful experience for him. A boy who had to be summoned to study with reluctance, a boy who studied only just before the exams – his results shot up, he did very well and he loved it. Finally he got recognition of his own worth because of the system there. Unfortunately his visa could not be extended and he returned to India to join Sydenham College.

Now he became a big hero. Nothing was complete without Baboo, be it a party, a football match or a cricket game. He became the Captain of the college cricket team. He loved sports and never missed a chance to watch matches on TV, whether of tennis or soccer, hockey or cricket. At 18, he was very tall, just under six feet. But what made him stand out was not his height but his personality, his behaviour, the ease with which he could make friends.

(On July 28, 1990, Vivek Singh, affectionately called Baboo, the only son of Jagjit and Chitra Singh, died tragically in a car accident on Marine Drive in Bombay. He was just a month short of 19 years of age.)

MONICA CHOWDHURY, *daughter* |
MY MOTHER WAS IN SHOCK. SHE BECAME WITHDRAWN AND STOPPED SINGING. PAPA WAS NUMB AND DEVASTATED FOR SIX MONTHS, BUT HIS MUSIC BECAME THE FOCUS FOR HIM. IT WAS AT THAT TIME THAT HE MADE A MUCH DEEPER CONNECTION WITH ME. MY CHILDREN AND HIS MUSIC ANCHORED HIM.

JAGJIT SINGH | This was the third turning point in my life. When he died. I could have been a broken man – I *was* a broken man...

That evening I was doing the background music for a Punjabi film. After that I went to perform at a small concert arranged by Abdul Rehman Bukhatir of Dubai, who was in town at that time. I finished the concert at around two in the morning and came home. I was changing my clothes when the call came. Chitra and the others were already at the hospital. The call was from Monica's husband, Jehangir. There's been an accident, he said. What happened, I asked, how is Baboo? He told me, He's no more.

That was that. I got it straight, no beating about the bush. It was a moment of pure desperation, though I composed myself as soon as I could: a man can go to any lengths in his desperation. I still remember that in my haste, I wore my pyjamas inside out.

MONICA CHOWDHURY, *daughter* | What I want to say very clearly is this: what the press did to my brother was very unfair. He died at 3 am, so how could the morning papers carry headlines that he was an alcoholic, a spoilt rich kid, without the forensic report which only came to us eight months later? The papers maligned my brother, dragged my family through muck. I fought that single-handedly, going to Azad Maidan every day, dealing with the legalities. I went through Marine Drive (where the accident occurred) getting affidavits from residents. In the end, I cleared his name and got retractions. It was the least I could do. My parents were in no fit state to do that; actually, neither was I, but I had no choice but to be strong. My older son was then nine months old, he was very attached to my brother. I had to put him in day care, then we lived with my parents for two years till things got settled. But somehow it never gets settled, does it?

It affected my parents in different ways. My mother was in shock, she became withdrawn and stopped singing. Papa was numb and devastated for six months, but his music became the focus for him. It was at that time that he made a much deeper connection with me. My children and his music anchored him.

But his death whacked us into looking at more than money, more than fame, because the bottom dropped out of our lives.

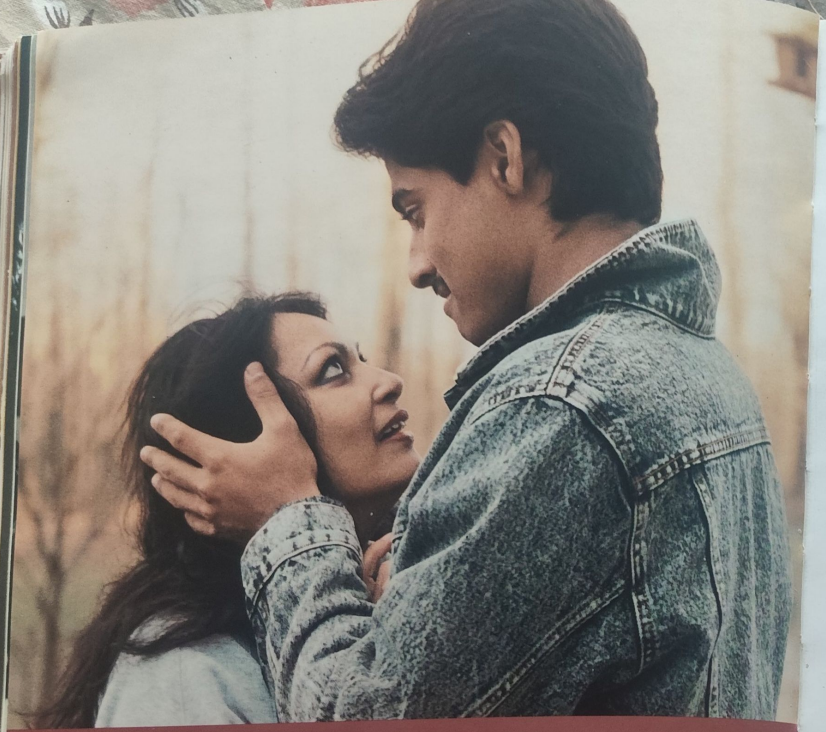
JAGJIT SINGH | After his death, I stopped singing completely for one month, and it was six months before I could give a concert. But after those first weeks, I took up my tanpura and began my riyaz, I thought, you have to live now, this is part of life, you have to go on. I felt, I must not let what had happened become a weakness to crush me, instead I should turn it into a strength. In some quarters it was said that I was finished, these rumours reached me, and made me even more determined.

But above all, it was the peace that I got from taking the tanpura that helped me to regain composure...tanpura, after all, is a form of meditation. Yes, the anguish remained, the pain of the memories, the grief, these stayed with me, but in the strokes of the tanpura I felt a kind of a peace, and I took to heart the words of Nida Fazli's poem:

"Apna gham le ke kahin aur na jaaya jaye,
Ghar mein bikhri hui cheezon ko sajaaya jaye..."

Let us not take our anguish elsewhere,
Let us make beautiful the scattered objects at home (within).

I focused on music, riyaz, started meditation. Of course there was despair, you long to bring him back, you search, you want to contact him through mediums, but ultimately I decided, No. You have to stop this, you have to live with it.



CHITRA SINGH, *wife* | We were shattered. My weight went down to 44 kilos, I was literally like a skeleton. He was a broken man. My grandson, Monica's son, suffered because his mother had to run around from police station to lawyers – everything. She had to do it because we were in no condition to do so.

I needed some questions answered. Why had this happened, why? There was hostility, absolute scepticism, a complete loss of faith in everything and everyone.

In search of answers, I started to meditate. I went to shops, sought out books, began reading extensively about the paths to spiritualism. In 1991 we went to England. There were friends who knew of mediums there who could materialise departed souls.

All three of us, he, Monica and I, were in the same condition, but at that point of time, my husband and daughter were far more spiritual than I was. My own concept of Divinity was that of Sri Ramakrishna Parmahansa. My father was a great believer and taught me the simple prayers I knew. My mother was neither religious nor spiritual, so there was no pooja, no ritual in our house. It was my grandmother who had all these observances, but in such a rigid manner – can't touch this, can't eat that – that it had no meaning for me. You blindly follow concepts of God that you are given, like the picture of Sri Ramakrishna in my childhood home, without really understanding, you don't even know that there is something to understand.

MONICA CHOWDHURY, *daughter* | Three days after Baboo passed away I started communicating with him. A friend of mine came and told me that he had a friend who was a medium who had a message for me from Baboo. He took me to meet the lady who initiated and started the process. Quite honestly, at an early point I thought my communication with my brother was all in my mind, not really with him – but I was given such details by him as to what had actually happened in the crash, who had come in, who had stolen stuff, all details which I have been able to verify. So there was very definite proof of life after death.

It was through this communication and suggestions from friends that that I was actually asked to go to England on a certain date to meet Gordon Higginson, a man of whose existence I was totally unaware at that point, but who was later to become my guru. I just went, it was a complete leap of faith.

I'll never forget my first sight of Gordon. I saw this beautiful man standing near a window with silver hair and amazing blue eyes. He looked at me across a crowd of hundreds of people and said: I've been waiting for you. Your brother and your grandfather came to me at a séance a week ago and and told me that you would be coming.It was after this that I called up my parents and asked them to come to England, so they came.

CHITRA SINGH, *wife* | We went to several mediums in England and had sittings with them. If we hadn't been to these people and received the evidence they gave us of life after death, I don't think we'd be here today the way you find us. We'd still be in that same shattered condition.

The evidence we got from the mediums, who did not know us, was overwhelming. Terms, words, the typical language he used, incidents that only we could have known about, all these created such an impact on me that I decided to enrol in meditation and mediumship courses at Stansted College to develop those inner qualities which we all have but are so ignorant about. We learnt about life after death, spirituality, healing. Upto 1995 or 96, I kept returning and came back richer in knowledge, awareness and empowerment. We were all changing in the way we were handling life – but we still didn't have the answers we sought.

There was a strange anticipation, it can't be described, but it was there flowing all around us. There were plenty of signals and indications; he was trying

to tell us something, like I am here with you, right here. And I knew and felt that he was there. He spoke to us in various ways. As long as I was hostile and skeptical, nothing came to me. When I finally let go, that's when I started experiencing things for myself. A friend of Babu's, a young girl, once came to see me. Suddenly the fragrance of Babu's after shave filled the room. She asked me, Do you smell it? Yes, I said, I know he's here.

I had to continue in the anticipation that some day, I'll talk to him directly, without needing a medium as a bridge. I finally began to understand what it all meant, why he had to go. Still, the pain is always with you, it never goes and nothing can take it away. I can't touch him, feed him, this is our fate, and we develop faith because we have no choice but to believe.

JAGJIT SINGH | In the beginning, Baboo appeared in my dreams a lot. I had many experiences, of which I'll tell you about two. Shortly after the death, I had gone to Khandala to clean the house there. I was having an afternoon nap when I heard him talking to me in a discussion, he spoke into my ear for a long time and went on talking, went on talking...Two months later I went to Pune to get away; also, my trainer, Magan, had told me that a horse which I owned – Outsider, I think the name was – should be raced, so I was going to see the race. I took a local train from Khandala and just before Pune, I got a strong fragrance, which was typical of him, as if he was sitting there. Of course, my thoughts were already centred on him. I felt very happy, I told my companion, Today my horse is going to win. And he did win.

Such things happened a lot; but the pain never goes away. After his death, my focus sharpened and I concentrated on singing and composing. Before that I was also interested in investments, in property. I had booked property in Pune, thinking that he might want to live there; I had land elsewhere; but then I started to wind up, to sell these which were no longer relevant to me.

Chitra never sang after that. Her not singing in musical terms didn't affect me and I didn't insist that she should sing. I gave her a free hand. She took a different turn altogether, and created for herself the power of healing: the amount of books she has read on these subjects is amazing.

Now she is keen that she must sing. Singing is such a thing that you cannot force it, it must come from within. The physical vocal chords that have become weak have to be nursed back, and that takes time and patience. She has started her riyaz, but she is very busy with her healing also, and that is showing results. In your own pain, you are hunting for others who are suffering from some pain – like looking for company – and if you can benefit the other, it is a source of satisfaction for you.

CHITRA SINGH, *wife* | I have had experiences through meditation that helped me towards composure. My introduction to spirituality led me to healing, the mediums told me I had to be a healer because my aura said so. I watched healers at work. A healer from Iceland came to India and we worked together here; he taught me the healing points and told me, You have so much dormant power within you. He made me heal with him, upto ten people a day, and made me promise that after he had returned I would continue with the work and fulfill my responsibilities.

It is a draining process. You're working with energy, blocked negative energy, and as you work on that you take it on yourself. Now I have learned how to protect myself and each time I work, I'm energised.

I was very nervous when I first worked alone, but someone, somewhere, was guiding me. I work with the energy of crystals and with spiritual healing, and I find the response is good, people are getting better. I began to understand the mind-body connection. If the emotional fields are imbalanced, it spills over into the body. The cosmos is full of positive energies which we absorb, but we contaminate those with negative thought processes such as fear, anger, anxiety.

Today I know that I have to be doing what I'm doing now, and nothing in the world could have brought me here except what happened because that woke me up. I was completely broken for the first half of these 12 years, but the second half has been devoted to educating and empowering myself. I think I became a better and more complete human being.

JAGJIT SINGH | After two months I returned to the studio. I had already started an album, "Sajda", with Lata Mangeshkar, in which some work remained to be done and I wanted to complete it. In 1991 I did my first tour. It was emotionally very difficult. In ghazal there are certain couplets which are connected in a very immediate way with your own life, and I broke down two or three times. The audience was very supportive and understanding.

Paradoxically at some point I started enjoying my pain, I don't know why. Perhaps because it increases your creativity, your concentration. My approach towards my family and my friends changed. I think I gained more power as a person, a human being, an artiste. After the accident, many things became unimportant to me, and a kind of detachment settled over me. My total focus was on practise and composition, and I started enjoying my work. The first album I did after my son's death was one of Gurbani, "Man Jite Jagjit", and you'll hear the pain in that, the mood of acceptance.

But in music when you suffer pain there is a strange kind of pleasure inside, you feel you are not present in the here-and-now, you are somewhere else.

The albums and the work didn't stop. "Someone, Somewhere" was recorded before his death, but released afterwards and we dedicated it to him. Then there was "Hope", which also had been recorded earlier. Once I had got through the difficult phase, or you could say, test, there was no looking back. "Sajda", "Kahkashan" (which was for a TV serial, where I worked with Jalal Agha and Ali Sardar Jafri), then later in the decade, "Silsilay" with Javed Akhtar and "Marasim" with Gulzar saheb. These are only a few.

GITA PREM, *rakhi sister* | Whenever I listen to "Sajda", it brings back to me memories of my daughter's wedding, which took place shortly after the album's release. Jagjit was there for me during the wedding even though it was a time of great personal sorrow for him; he must have felt the importance of the occasion for me, she is my only child, and I – how could I have asked him at that moment of bereavement to come and be present. But I didn't need to ask, he was just there, saying, I'm the oldest uncle of the bride.

He and Chitra helped us so much. Chitra, in her role as the Mami, sent jewellery and saris, keeping the tradition of gifts given by the bride's maternal uncle. For three days he used to come and go, checking on arrangements, supervising all that was happening. He wore a pink turban to greet the baraat, and in every way affirmed his relationship with me as a sister. I'll never forget his role in my daughter's wedding; to me he is as close and dear as my own blood brothers.

JAGJIT SINGH | It could be that a more spiritual bent emerged after the accident – such things make a difference to one's life – but I would say that I had that from the very beginning, perhaps more so earlier. You can make out from my choice of lyrics; it wasn't something I showed off. But after this, people felt it was more evident. Because I recorded bhajans, they said I was becoming religious: though to me, that's not religion, it's a way of life. Where is there religion in the Gurbani? It's about human psychology, about the world, what it is, and how it all goes.

KARTAR SINGH, *younger brother* | After 1990,

his choice of verse became more serious, more philosophical, closer to life's realities. There is an added weight to the voice, and pain, the subject matter deals more with contemporary and human issues. The pain of humanity comes more into focus and romantic numbers take second place. There is the universal appeal of something that we can all identify with, What is mine, all that I have belongs to Him; Whatever I have gained, that is His; Whatever I have lost, that is His...

One shabad that he has sung, its mool mantra addresses God: You are everything, I am nothing. When I listen to him singing it, I feel as if I'm in front of God with folded hands, open to His mercy. I feel though it's him singing, it's my voice, my appeal, that he's singing on my behalf; and so strong is its effect that I weep and weep.

Sadhana is a different form of meditation. In that flow you are totally immersed, the music wells out and it is divine. He was once in this state of reverie when a man called out for a request. He just looked at him and said, *Sab gayab ho gaya*, It has all disappeared, my concentration is lost. When he gets to that stage of trance, I feel he is close to God.

SWAMI SURADAS, *ISKON* | 20 years back, we had asked him to perform at the Bhakti Kalakshetra Centre of Performing Arts at Hare-Krishna Land here. He was as humble then as he is now. He agreed, and said he was ready to do for Lord Krishna and His devotees, and that's how we met.

He did with us what I believe is his first ever bhajan album, "Samarpan", where both he and Chitraji sang. It was fantastic. The bhajans were chosen by us from the rich storehouse of the spiritual masters of Bengal, the Gaudiya lineage, and they were given the most sublime music by Jagjit Singh. The Hare-Krishna Mahamantra was on that album, the chanting of the Holy Name, and it was as if the special light of the Lord was coming through him, so it is no wonder that to this day the album is loved by devotees everywhere. All over the world, this album is played, sung to, gifted.

What can I say about his music? I have not heard his ghazals, let me tell you frankly, but when I hear him singing bhajans I am reminded of the words of Prabhupadji, our founding Acharya. He said that musicians are souls who are specially blessed by the Lord, who sing with dedication and feeling as an offering to Him. That is why a particular quality of devotion is enhanced in the person who sings bhajans as a prarthana or prayer. The Holy Name has a lot of power; sung with dedication as an offering, it is a benediction not only to those who listen but also to him who sings.

NIDA FAZLI, *poet* | The life you live and the art you create have a deep relationship, as intimate as that of lovers, as intense as the worship of a priest – it depends on which level this relationship is placed. Jagjit Singh has made of his God-given voice, his music, a worship. Because his faith is Sikhism, a blend of the different spiritual streams of India, the collective wisdom of saints and sages, Jagjit has in his voice the many seasons of India, her soft breezes, her hopes and aspirations. Our tradition is basically an oral tradition and Jagjit has followed its path. He has seen life with open eyes – he has not learnt as much from books as from his experience, his journeys, his interactions with the lives of others – he has learnt about life – and he is a down-to-earth man. His voice is shaded with all these aspects of tears and smiles, turmoil and sparkles, all of which appear and re-appear in his voice.

Jagjit's singing has a spiritual shade which can only come when one is illuminated from within. Jagjit, by his actions, his sadhana, his devotion, has made within himself a temple – where there are deities, nature, love, delicacy – the sparkle of innocent mischief. If this temple is not within you then whether you are a poet or a singer, the voice does not come to life. In order to breathe life into words, this spiritual base is necessary.

SWAMI SURADAS, *ISKON* | Jagjit Singh always had spiritual qualities, but they were covered as the sun is obscured by clouds. The winds come and blow away the clouds, and that is what has happened to him: I feel he is going more towards God and the perception of God as One, whatever name we call Him. It's there in the purity of his voice, it's growing in association with his music; he sings with such beautiful bhakti as if making an offering of his heart.

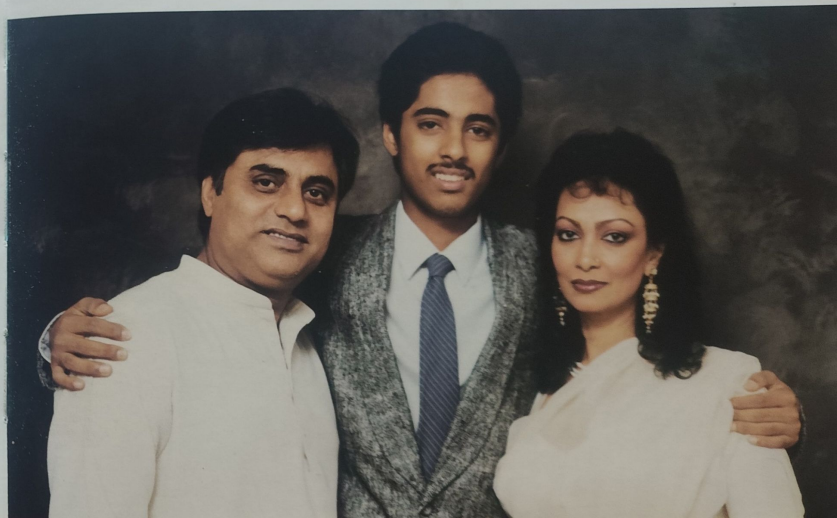
I may lecture to people for an hour-and-a-half, but it won't have the same impact on them as a single bhajan of Jagjit Singh.

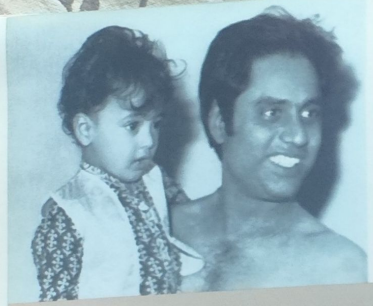
NIDA FAZLI, *poet* | Jagjit has kept an innocence, a wonder alive within him even in his darkest days. Once, after his son's death, when I was at a concert where there were many young people, I asked him, Yaar, how come in this modern age of jeans and pop music, you had so many youngsters at the concert – and that too, for ghazals? His reply was innocent and artistic. Yaar, he said, it seems as if he has reached heaven and told the young people of his age to look after his father.

After the cremation he put his hand on my shoulder and said: It feels as if life's very purpose has disappeared.

For a brief time, this tragedy made a poet of him, and he left some papers with me, a collection of ghazals and free verses which I still have. The last lines of one poem read: My friend, when my time comes, then bring your son to me for some time.

Jagjit could have been negative and bitter with this sorrow, that would have been quite natural, but he has not allowed that to happen. Once, he had one son: today, when I see him with his youthful fans, it seems as if he has hundreds and thousands of children who shower love on him.





NIDA FAZLI, *poet* | JAGJIT COULD HAVE BEEN NEGATIVE AND BITTER WITH THIS SORROW, THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN QUITE NATURAL, BUT HE HAS NOT ALLOWED THAT TO HAPPEN. ONCE, HE HAD ONE SON: TODAY, WHEN I SEE HIM WITH HIS YOUTHFUL FANS, IT SEEMS AS IF HE HAS HUNDREDS AND THOUSANDS OF CHILDREN WHO SHOWER LOVE ON HIM.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW SINGING TALENT

JAGJIT SINGH | In the late 70s, Polydor wanted ghazal music. I had known Mr. Virinder Luthra of the company earlier and we had kept in contact. He approached me to compose an album for Talat Aziz, who was a student in Hyderabad in those days. I went to Hyderabad, had dinner with the family. His father asked me to listen to him, and also to take him as a student; I explained that this I couldn't do, as he and I were in different cities. The matter ended there.

Virinder Luthra was keen on the album. He asked to me to launch Talat Aziz, select the ghazals and compose for his album, give him a little training. So I did that, and we completed the recording. After that he was on his own. I was asked to launch him so I did; I did it as a composer, which was also part of my work.

The album "Jagjit Singh presents Talat Aziz" was successful. Seeing that, I thought, why not launch others? So I did another album for young, upcoming talent which was recorded in 1979 and called "Talent of the 80s", which included promising artistes like Ghanshyam Vaswani, Seema Sehgal, Vinod Sehgal, Junaid Akhtar, Ashok Khosla, Smita Chakravati.

People asked me: By promoting other artistes, aren't you scared of creating competition for yourself? But I approve of that; I need competition, or else I'll become stale; when there is competition, there is growth also, it is an artistic challenge.

Firstly, these were all deserving people who needed the chance and exposure. Plus, with new artistes, the overall market for ghazal music grows. That in fact happened. In the 80s music companies saw a future in ghazals and started promoting new artistes. That decade was the ghazal boom, but slowly those who could not survive had to leave the field as also-rans, even though so many sang so well.

GHANSHYAM VASWANI, *singer and student of Jagjit Singh* | Jagjit Singh has been responsible for the introduction of so many young artistes. Other singers are too insecure to do something like that, so this speaks very highly of him. He has spotted talent and given an opportunity wherever he could. He launched Talat Aziz, he discovered Kumar Sanu in a restaurant, he made an album called "Talent of the 80s" in which he featured six young singers, myself among them, with Vinod Sehgal, Junaid Akhtar and others. I was lucky enough to also get a solo album in 1983, "Jagjit Singh presents Ghanshyam Vaswani".

Since I don't come from a musical background, I had to learn a lot of things from him, which he taught with great generosity—about music, about composition, about riyaz. He had no motive in teaching me other than music, and never asked me for anything. And anyway, what do I have to give?

I first appeared on the TV also through him. There used to be a programme, Aarohi, in the days of black-and-white television, on which he introduced me and Vinod Sehgal. I have also been in concerts with him and Chitraji, though now that has stopped because although he wants to promote new artistes on the stage, organisers and the audience prefer that he perform alone.

He has taught me a lot about composition, for example, the punctuation, where and how to stress, appropriate raga and moods, rhythm. And practicalities, such as, compositions should always be within the range of the singer so that he or she is comfortable singing it and can concentrate on the emotional aspect.

JAGJIT SINGH | In the album "Forget Me Not", it was Ghanshyam Vaswani who did the music. I only helped him if he got stuck, but the basic plan is his. The interludes were done by Deepak Pandit, so I didn't do any of the music, I was totally out of it. So it was a change – a change for me from myself also!

I don't lose anything by giving a hand to people. In my experience, when you distribute your knowledge, it multiplies. There are things I have discovered while teaching others, new facets of what I had already learned. Nobody helped me like this when I had just arrived in Bombay, I had to go through great difficulties and struggles. I can take one of two attitudes: see others suffer as I did, or help them. I feel, why not share? If you help others it doesn't demean you, it can only earn you praise. Perhaps there is a hidden motive here also: if I help him, he'll praise me, others will admire me and say how good I am. Who knows – these are all in the sub-conscious.

When I look back, I think of my father and his helping nature. How he sold things to be able to give money to relatives who had lost everything in 1947. How nobody was turned away without food. How anyone in trouble would come to him. These are samskaras which I saw from childhood and learned from them.

THE MAKING OF SAJDA, 1991

SANJEEV KOHLI, *son of music director, the late Madan Mohan; ex-HMV* | One day Jagjit tells me, My ambition in life is to record Lata Mangeshkar. This must have been in the latter part of the 80s.

Now, there was a history to their interaction, some hearsay that made her a little wary of Jagjit and Chitra Singh. I know Lataji very well, have known her since my childhood, because she was very close to my father. I went to her, and I said, You must do this album. She replied, I like his music very much, but what is the need for me to record with him? I hardly do any non-film albums now – and a ghazal album, after all these years? Then, I must have more tuning with the composer. It took me about two years to convince her.

We had a session for two, two-and-a-half hours. Jagjitji's compositions were absolutely mind-blowing. In that meeting he came across so convincingly, saying: Listen. Forget about any preconceived notions. You are for me a paragon, and there are tunes I've been composing for the last 15-20 years just for you. I could have recorded them, but I saved them up in the hope that one day we'd work together. These are those tunes.

She was completely bowled over by his sincerity. There were no barriers beyond that. I remember I used jokes as a ploy to get them comfortable – both have a terrific sense of humour and a great repertoire of jokes – so we'd often begin each sitting with half-an-hour of jokes.

So we started working on the album, and let me tell you, it was not easy. At that very moment I chose to leave India to live abroad. We had a few sittings, but then I went away to London; I'd keep in touch from there. As I was still looking after A & R for HMV, I'd come to India every three months, and find that no progress was being made. So I had to fly down from London for the dubbings, attend the recording and go back.

It was a fascinating experience. Lataji was going through terrible health problems at that time. If she fixed a recording date, in the morning she'd call and say, Today I'm really unwell, can we please postpone? And I had flown down from London to be in town for that date! Then I'd call Jagjitji, and it was usually Chitraji who would pick up the phone. I'd be so uncomfortable telling her about the cancellation! It was tough, but Jagjitji never allowed this to interfere with his enthusiasm for the project.

Actually, "Sajda" was intended to be a solo album of Lata Mangeshkar. That was Jagjit Singh's plan, and the songs were made accordingly. But during that one year of recording, I had serious doubts whether the album would be completed or not. Lataji not being well, and having so many other commitments, we felt that perhaps 16 solos would not be possible. I then begged Jagjitji : Can we do some duets, because the audience would really want to hear them singing together, not only him composing for her. He agreed, and so duets were added, as also some solos by him to complete the album.

But the album took its time to finish. In that period, Baboo died tragically in 1990, and the album was delayed. In the meantime, he released "Someone Somewhere", which he and Chitraji had recorded earlier and which they dedicated to Baboo's memory. "Hope" came out next – so "Sajda" had to take its own time. It was finally completed in 1991 and released in January 1992.

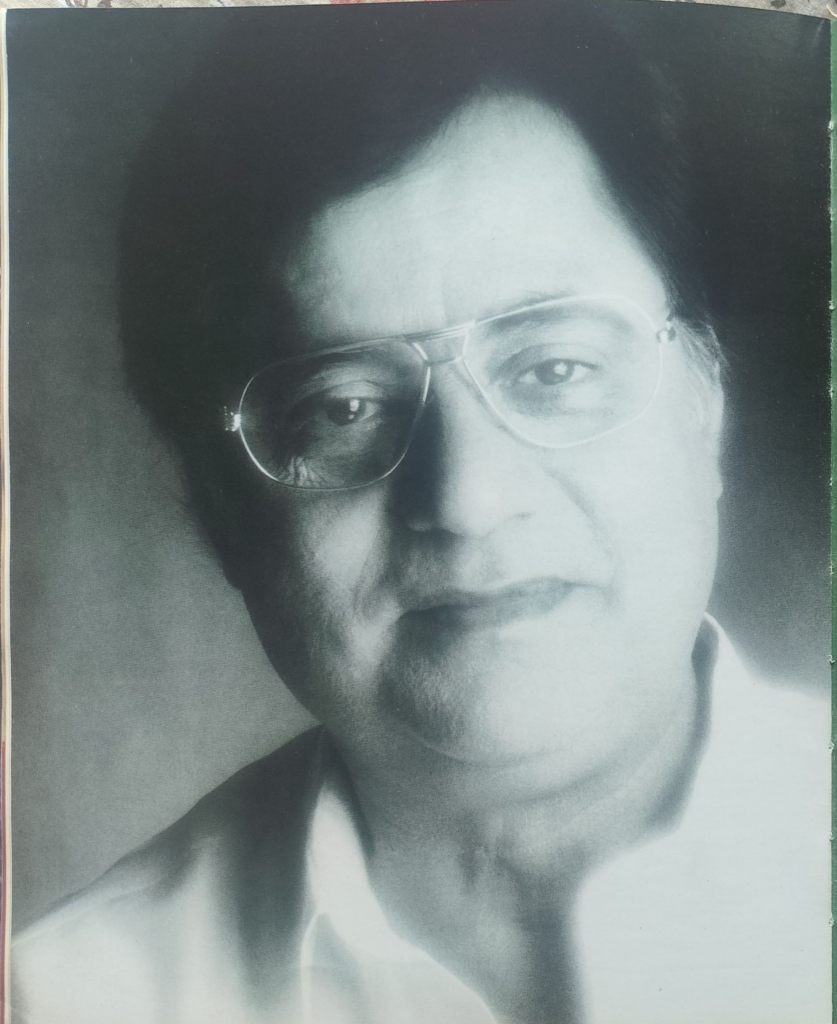
By this time, Chitraji had stopped singing, stopped going out anywhere. I went to her, and said, Please come to this launch, it will mean so much to your husband. This is a big moment for him, he's waited so long for this album, so please be there. She said, I'll come, but I'll sit in a corner.

I compered that function. The Chief Minister was to release the album; everything was prepared, the sniffer dogs had been through the area, the security was in place. But at the last moment, there was some crisis in the Government, and we were told that he couldn't come. What do we do now? I went to Lataji, and she said: *Meri shuru se iccha thi, ki yeh album Chitraji release karen. Par mein sochti rahi, mein kaise kahoon, woh manengi nahin* – From the very beginning, it was my wish that Chitraji should release this album, but I didn't know how to ask, as I didn't think she would agree.

I went to Chitraji and asked her, Will you release this album? I don't know how she agreed, despite her wanting to keep a low profile. So she released the album, dressed in a simple white salwar-kameez, a far cry from the glamorous Chitra of former times. That picture of the three of them is probably the first one taken of her in public after her seclusion.

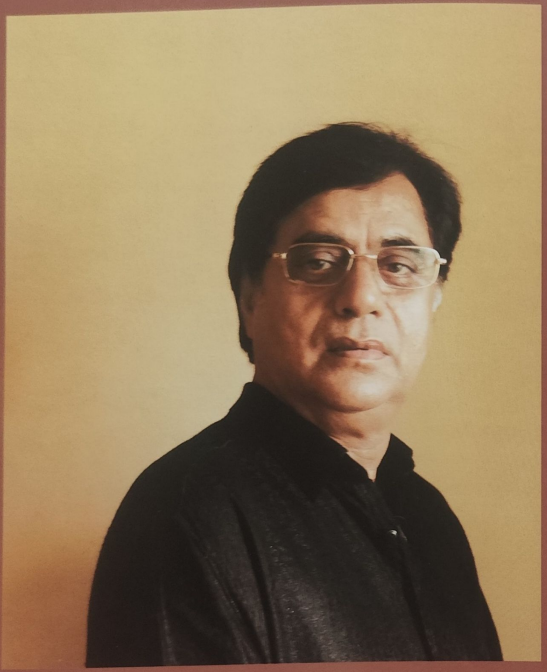
I think that Chitraji grew up listening to and adoring Lata Mangeshkar. She used to tell me: I would quietly sneak into Famous Studio when I was unknown (that was even before she met Jagjitji). I would go there as a visitor, and listen while the recording was going on. My father, Madan Mohan, would tell us: *Woh aake Lataji ke gaane sunti hai* – She comes to listen to Lataji's songs. And even Lataji remembers.

Somewhere or the other, I know "Sajda" had Chitraji's blessings. Otherwise a wife, a singing partner, could well have asked: Why now do you need to do an album with Lata Mangeshkar?



THE GODFATHER OF GHAZAL

1997 onwards



JAGJIT SINGH | I HAVE RECORDED FOR EVERY MAJOR COMPANY IN INDIA. BUT TO LIVE IN YOUR PAST IS A VERY DANGEROUS THING. IF YOU DO THAT YOU'RE FOOLING YOURSELF. EVERY MORNING IS A NEW BEGINNING, EVERY ALBUM IS A NEW ALBUM, EVERY CONCERT IS A NEW TEST.

KARTAR SINGH, *younger brother* | There was a steady contact between Veerji and my parents, and when we shifted to Delhi, they met often. We had an understanding that I would stay with our parents to look after them. But when he came he devoted his time to them and never let them feel that he was far away.

Father was very proud of Veerji and his achievements. It made him feel special to be recognised as his father. He was very pleased when Veerji made recordings of the Gurbani, and even more so when he made an album of all his favourites, shabads that he had asked Veerji to record. He used to listen to that over and over again.

GITA PREM, *rakhi sister* | Jagjit is a very strict teacher. He believes that to really learn music you must be prepared to make sacrifices. So he'll have the fans in the room switched off, and if people complain about the heat, he'll say, Nothing will happen if you have to bear a little discomfort. But if the air temperature changes, the pitch of the tanpura will also change, and your voices won't sound right. He listens very minutely to each note.

When he begins his riyaz, he does sur-ka-riyaz, practise of scales, also breathing exercises, I've seen him do those for long periods, because proper breath control is so important for the voice. Slowly, slowly, he comes to the practise of a raga, then he'll take up a bandish and maybe a ghazal or bhajan, two-three hours are easily spent like this. And in the matter of his riyaz, he's very meticulous, he's never been lazy or put it off. If people complain that they don't have a room for riyaz, he'll retort, You have a bathroom in your house, don't you! Sit there and practise!

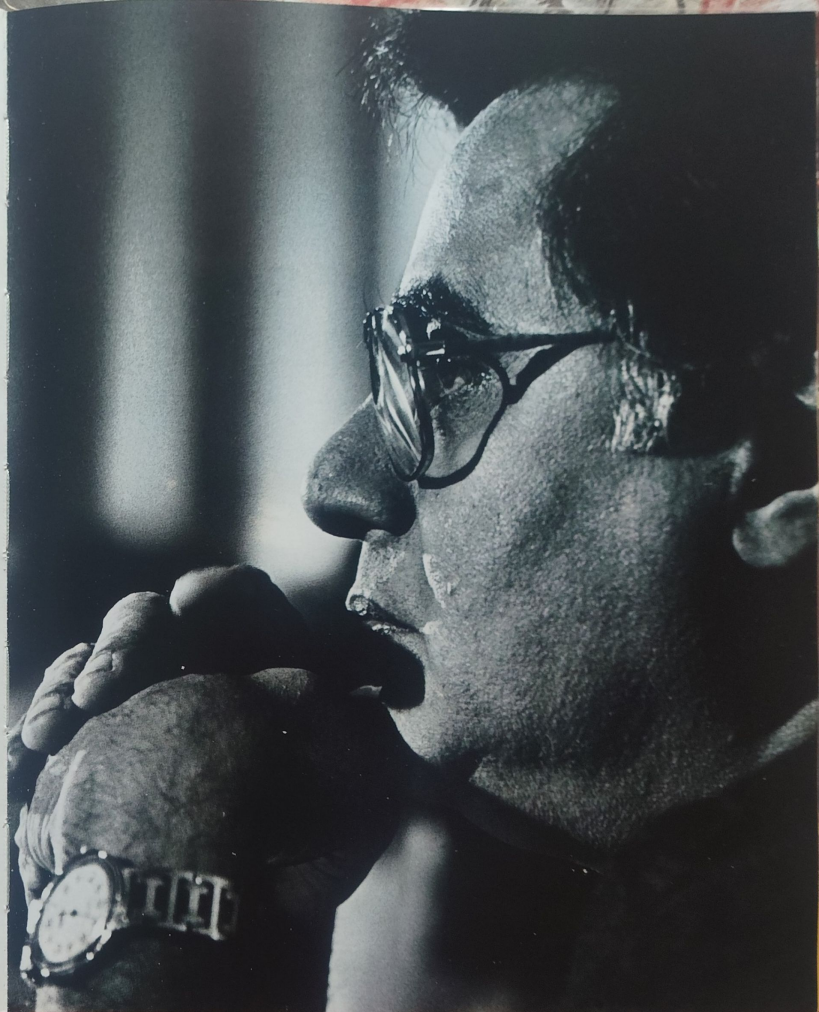
Once he had a concert at Bhaidas Auditorium. We went to listen and he sang wonderfully until late into the night. The next morning I wanted to congratulate him, so I called him at around 11 o'clock. I could hear the drone of the tanpuras and his voice in riyaz. When he came to the phone, I said, Jagjit, you sang so well last night! And you're not resting, you've already begun again! He replied, *Jagjit Singh aise to nahin ban jaate* – a Jagjit Singh doesn't happen just like that!

JAGJIT SINGH | I have recorded for every major company in India. But to live in your past is a very dangerous thing. If you do that you're fooling yourself. Every morning is a new beginning, every album is a new album, every concert is a new test.

I have no strict format for concerts, but there are about 35-40 ghazals I have chosen for the stage. Not every ghazal is suitable for a live performance, some which are serious or slow may be better placed for an album. The classical poets I sing on stage are Ghalib and Daagh; and many modern poets, Nida Fazli, Javed Akhtar, Sudarshan Faakir among them.

I can usually assess the audience with the first song: are they connoisseurs, a formal group, what is their level and therefore what should be my approach. Depending on that I select the repertoire, taking care that there are no audio jumps. For example, if I sing a ghazal based in Raga Darbari and the next in Raga Puriya Dhanshri, there will definitely be a jump. The tonic "sa" creates its own ambiance, its mahaul; so I stay for the next few songs with the same "sa". The mahaul created by the raga and the "sa" is maintained for about 45 minutes to an hour, taking care to stay within a similar mood and range for smoothness. Then there's a break for the musicians to tune, to break the old spell so that now I can create a new spell. Many things come with experience.

JAGPREET LAMBA, *close associate and impresario* | My association with Jagjit Singh, whom I call Uncle, has been very deep ever since I organised his first concert with me in 1994. From that time, he's been my teacher, my guide; he's taught me everything I know about this industry; he has formed me as a person. To me, he's as close and dear as my own father.



As a professional, I watch how he deals with people, and have learnt from that.

In Delhi, many of his concerts have taken place at the Siri Fort Auditorium, he's been performing there since about 1984. I've seen that the entire staff of Siri Fort gather when he's performing just to come and meet him. Everyone from the "safaiwalas" or cleaners right to the person who runs the auditorium, and the gate-keepers, they'll flock to the gate from where he'll enter, or come backstage for that one chance to spend a moment with him. And he meets them all, greeting them with great warmth; he listens to them patiently, he makes the time for them, whether before or after the concert or during the interval. He feels for them at a human level; that's why they really love him and want to stay in touch with him. He's a people's man.

I haven't come across an artiste who can handle an audience the way he does. Not just during the performance, where he makes the audience feel that he's part of them, but even afterwards. He never gets irritated when hundreds of people are milling around asking for autographs. At first I used to barge into the crowd to try and escort him out, then one day he told me, Let them be. These people come to me because they want to connect with me. All they want is an autograph, and how much time does that take? Don't worry – I'll handle it. And he'll stay there, giving autographs, meeting fans, whether it takes five minutes or half-an-hour, even after a three hour concert of nonstop singing.

KARTAR SINGH, *younger brother* | Veerji's commitment to his work, his concerts, his audience is really remarkable. Let me give you a recent example.

Our mother, Beeji, was seriously ill in December 2001, and I called him in the morning in Bombay to inform him. Chitra Bhabhi took the call; he was out of the house, and was leaving the same evening for a concert in Calcutta. Mother passed away in the afternoon; by the time I contacted Bombay, he was already on the way to the airport en route to Calcutta. I called him on his mobile, and he came straight to Delhi. But to cancel the concert was not an option for him. He realised that the sponsor would be in big trouble and run into a loss; he had also invited Ghulam Ali to sing, he had sold the tickets, it was a capacity crowd.

Veerji said: What had to happen with us, has happened. So we decided that after the cremation in the morning, he'd go to Calcutta in the afternoon and do the concert as scheduled. He did just that; but you can imagine the state of mind he must have been in. This is also one side of him, the dedicated professional.

JAGPREET LAMBA, *close associate and impresario* | He's very relaxed. I've never seen him hyper, rarely seen him angry. Backstage, there's no tension in his green room. Before coming – and he's invariably punctual – he'll have rested awhile. He'll have taken some refreshment, and then sat alone for a few minutes, a kind of meditation to get into the mindset of a stage peformance. He prepares himself before coming into the green room, because he knows that, once he's there, he'll never be alone, there will be too many people waiting to meet him. So he talks to them; just five minutes before going onstage, he'll want to be by himself again.

But he's very particular about his musicians. When he travels on concert tours with them, they all stay in the same hotel, no distinctions there. He won't leave the airport until everyone's baggage has arrived, and until his musicians are settled in the cars with all their instruments. They have to be first on the road, then he'll follow them. He makes sure that meals and cars have been organised for them, and sees to it that all the equipment is properly placed on the stage. In a nutshell, he takes care of the most minor detail concerning the comfort and well-being of his group; this is something I haven't seen other artistes doing.

CHITRA SINGH, *wife* | I HAVE BEEN LEARNING FROM HIM, EVEN TODAY I'M LEARNING FROM HIM. NOT JUST ABOUT MUSIC BUT ABOUT LIFE. I SEE HIM, SEE THE WAY HE OPERATES, THE WAY HE TREATS PEOPLE, HE JUST GIVES, GIVES, GIVES...

NIDA FAZLI, *poet* |

THIS IS THE MAGIC OF JAGJIT SINGH'S VOICE: IT HAS THE SWEETNESS OF THE MOTHER, THE BEAUTY OF A FATHER'S LOVE, THE TENDERNESS OF A DEEP RELATIONSHIP AND IS LIKE A SOOTHING OINTMENT UPON ONE'S WOUNDS. IT COMES TO YOU, AND WITHOUT TAKING ANYTHING, GOES AWAY.

He's like a father figure to them, no doubt about that. Moreover, as in my case, each one of them has grown in life thanks to his constant support and encouragement.

CHITRA SINGH, *wife* | Meanwhile, I have begun riyaz again. I won't go back to the stage, but I'm trying to slowly develop my voice. It's an intuitive feeling – if singing is a gift I've been given, then I have no right to dishonour it which I have been doing for the past 12 years. Not deliberately dishonouring, there was a time when I quite literally could not sing. Now I feel I should try again. The throat is a very delicate mechanism, 12 years of rusting doesn't go away just like that. But today I have come to a point where I can even think of singing and recording providing my voice comes back. Today I'm willing, I'm no longer connecting it with my loss, which at one time it was, so deeply connected that my voice was choked.

And now when I'm talking about Baboo, you don't see me crying. You don't see me overwhelmed. That's because it's as if he is here. When I'm talking, he's here. It's a pleasure for me to talk about him. I love to talk about him. He was and still is such a source of joy.

MONICA CHOWDHURI, *daughter* | Mother has mellowed a lot, she's strong and coming into her own. The two of them are connected and close. He had a spiritual side always, but it really opened up after my brother's passing, his loss let his tears out.

Papa's had a tough life. He has been the strength and support of his family, he has a big heart and is one of the most giving human beings I know.

CHITRA SINGH, *wife* | I have been learning from him, even today I'm learning from him. Not just about music but about life. I see him, see the way he operates, the way he treats people, he just gives, gives, gives...

My life with him has not been very smooth, and not only because of our loss. I have had to make a lot of compromises and adjustments within myself. Half my life has gone in teaching myself that I need to accept him as he is, he's not going to change, and it's taken me 30 years to realise this! I wish this awareness had come much earlier, but such things come only when they have to; I'm thankful that it came at last.

One thing I had very firmly set in my head: to be with him, whatever, come rain or shine. I just had to be with him. I can't think of any reason for wanting this other than love and a lot of respect. I know him; this is the man, this is the way he's going to be, and I still love him.

I'm fully aware of his drawbacks, his follies, but it doesn't matter. It just doesn't matter.

JEHANGIR CHOWDHURI, *son-in-law and cinematographer* | If you ever get a chance to see him with children, it's amazing. I've never seen an adult who's more like a child with children than him. That's one of the wonderful things about him. His unbridled joy is exactly like a child's; all children relate to him, and I think it's a tribute to him that despite his fame he still has that innocence and joy.

He's a wonderful grandfather to our children, loves to spoil them, but also makes sure they develop along the right lines, he's very concerned about that. He takes the children off on his own to have fun with his horses. Horses, children and him, they all get along very well together.

CHITRA SINGH, *wife* | After Baboo, Monica has now bonded with us with so much more depth. Her children, Armaan and Umer, have brought fresh joy into our lives. Today she considers Jagjitji as her father. Jagjitji on his part calls her Hamari Beti. Her children are very open with their grandfather, Nanu. And Nanu has a way with children.

JAGJIT SINGH | I HAVE A BUSY WORKING SCHEDULE. MY RELAXATION COMES FROM HORSES, IT'S A BREAK FROM SINGING. IT'S A CHANGE, IT'S A HOBBY. NOBODY TALKS ABOUT MUSIC, THEIR LANGUAGE IS DIFFERENT, SO YOU RECHARGE YOUR BATTERIES THERE.

JAGJIT SINGH | Our daughter Monica is a very intense mother. She works very hard in bringing her children up in the best possible way, whatever reservations were there between her and me just fell away after Baboo. She and her family give both Chitra and me a sense of belonging, sharing and caring. We spend many of our evenings in Monica's house amongst fun and frolic.

Before Arman started school, he spent a lot of time with us. He is moody, a little difficult to please, but I must say that my success rate with him is quite good! Baboo was very fond of Arman, and in my mind's eye I still have a picture of Arman sleeping on a rocking chair, cradled in Baboo's lap. He's fond of chess as his father, Jehangir, is good at the game. I've tried to play with him two or three times, but always feared he'd defeat me-and he did, but I enjoyed the defeat. Now he has a new friend, the computer.

Umer is an easy, friendly child, who follows his older brother around in hero-worship. I love to see the two of them working together on the computer.

Jehangir is very good with both his children, and there is great love between them. I miss this kind of intimacy in my own life; sometimes when I see them together I feel jealous, but the next moment I accept the reality and begin to enjoy the sight.

RANA SAHRI, *poet* | For an artiste to share success with someone else – that's greatness. And that's Jagjit Singh.

Some time ago he gave a concert at Siri Fort Auditorium in Delhi. It's a large auditorium, and – as with all his concerts—it was packed to capacity, there must have been over 2000 people there. I was in the audience that day, and he was aware of my presence. He sang one of my ghazals, and people liked his rendition, there was tremendous applause. Obviously, the acclaim was for him as the singer. But, as that huge hall and its audience fell silent after the applause, he said: The ghazal that I have just sung and that you have appreciated so openly was written by a poet whose name is Rana Sahri. He is here with us today. Wherever he is, I would like him to stand up, and please give him a warm welcome.

With those words he gifted me a moment in my life for which people hunger and thirst for years and years: to have one's work as a poet publicly acknowledged by music lovers, poetry lovers, connoisseurs. That moment was a treasure beyond value.

JEHANGIR CHOWDHURI, *son-in-law and cinematographer* | His generosity is really amazing. He gives without any thought of a return. He gives and he derives joy in giving which is about the purest way one can behave. He has helped so many people, on the spur of the moment when they least expected. There are a lot of grateful people. I have seen people cry because of his generosity and he does it in a way that preserves their self respect and dignity.

RAMAN KUMAR, *film and TV writer-director* | Till today he has kept that relationship with me which started with Saath Saath in 1981. For me, it's a strong emotional bond, a very personal one, where often in friendship you don't realise how busy the other person is. I did a lot of work for television, and I'd phone him and say: I need a song. Wherever he was, he'd call me to him; I'd go, and he'd ask me: When do you want to do it? I have time at the studio day after tomorrow, shall we do it then? And within days the song would be recorded. I used to get these time slots so easily from him – and still do – that I thought, he's only

busy during the weekends when he does his shows, during the week he must be free.

Of course that was not so. But I only realised what a tight schedule he had when I once took somebody to meet him who wanted to do an album with him. He agreed to do it and asked for his diary to settle on dates. This was August; and after he looked at his diary, he said: I can give you 15 days in January, those are the first available dates.

I was astounded. In all the years that I had known him, close to two decades from the early 80s into the very late 90s, he never ever made me feel how busy he was, or indeed that he was too busy for me. But realisation dawned after I witnessed this discussion with an outsider. And I understood too that the largeheartedness extends to never making you aware that he is being generous.

KULDIP DESAI, *personal assistant to Jagjit Singh* | I used to work at the Race Course. I was always very keen on music. My biggest opportunity came, when I saw Jagjitji at the races. I knew I had to cultivate him and get close to him.

I think racing is one interest and activity that gives him a total relaxation, a completely different ambience from his regular field of activity, that is studios, recordings, concerts. So gradually I managed to get closer to him. It was literally like, he gave me a finger to hold and I caught hold of the whole of him. Little wonder there, because he is one artiste, who pulls anyone in his orbit with The magic of his music.

It was then that I realized, that I did not need to look anywhere else. I just had to be with him and I would be looked after, because his greatness is such that he gives you everything before you have to ask for it. I have full faith in him and know for sure that whatever I do in life will be with Jagjitji.

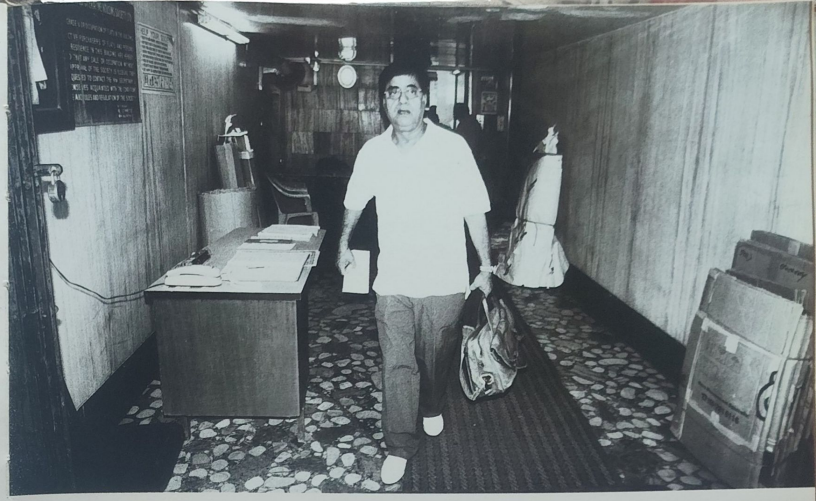
Apart from all this, what attracted me most about this man was his generosity and concern for others. Whoever has ever come in contact with him, has stayed in his life. He tolerates people with all their faults and still finds something good about them. He never allows anyone to feel small or humiliated, he covers up for them and continues to help. All his old musicians, whom he does not really need, get regularly paid at all recordings and concerts. I know that many of his, not so successful old friends and associates get regular financial support from Jagjitji.

He truly is a rare personality who is endowed with so many marvelous qualities. Such people are not born very often. He is an institution in himself, a complete man, a complete human being and of course an unparalleled musician. Jagjitji and Chitraji, together, have given a new credibility, a new respectability and a new status to musicians and singers. I have seen people clamoring and vying with each other to get close to him, to get a touch of that wonderful energy, that brings anyone out of gloom. To sum up my feelings, my emotions and my life with Jagjitji, all I can say is that he is my religion.

JAGJIT SINGH | I have a very busy working schedule. My relaxation comes from horses, it's a break from singing. It's a change, it's a hobby. Nobody talks about music, their language is different, so you recharge your batteries there. You meet a completely different type of people, and that's good; if you keep talking about the same thing always you'll get stagnant.

It's a hobby which I enjoy, both racing and owning horses. My horses are stabled; they are race horses looked after by trainers and syces. I have three now, but during the Bombay season, I barely go four-five times in that period – it is also the season for concerts so I travel a lot. But I enjoy going on special days, like Derby Day or the Thousand Guineas, and whenever my horse is running.

Maybe it's a bit of show-off also. In the eyes of



most people to own horses is a big thing – the sport of kings – so perhaps in the sub-conscious, there's that element also. I enjoy some limited gambling also, which is done for fun.

DEEPAK PANDIT, *musician and arranger* | I used to enjoy horse racing and betting but Uncle (that's what we all call Jagjitji) discouraged me. It's dangerous for you, he said, you could lose a lot of money. But when we travel both Uncle and I like going to the casino.

Once we were in Las Vegas in USA, and we went to the casino. We were playing roulette, and when you're gambling, you lose track of time, you're not even aware when night turns to dawn. We were at the same table, and both of us were losing. He knew that I'd ask him for money, and I did – Give me a hundred or two, Uncle, I said. Let's see if my luck changes. He gave me the money and again I lost. Now he wanted me to return to my room, perhaps because he didn't want me to lose more money, or maybe he just wanted to play undisturbed. I too wanted him to go upstairs, thinking that then I could play at another table on my own. So we said goodnight to each other and went our separate ways. His room and mine were in separate towers, but the lifts were in the same lobby and faced each other.

After a short while, when I thought it was safe, I came back downstairs and out of the lift – only to find myself face-to-face with Uncle, who had also returned! We had a hearty laugh when we saw each other and

SUDARSHAN FAAKIR, POET |

HIS SENSE OF HUMOUR IS PART OF HIS PERSONALITY. HE IS A TREASUREHOUSE OF JOKES, HE KNOWS THOUSANDS. HIS HUMOUR IS EFFORTLESS, AS IF IT RUNS THROUGH HIS BLOOD AND VEINS. ONCE I WAS SPEAKING TO HIM ON THE PHONE, AND I SAID, BHAPAJI, I'VE BEEN THINKING – TO WHICH HE REPLIED, QUICK AS A FLASH, SO YOU'VE BEGUN THINKING NOW!

JAGJIT SINGH | PEOPLE FIND IT STRANGE THAT, BEING A GHAZAL SINGER MYSELF, I'M HELPING OTHER GHAZAL SINGERS. FROM THE TIME THAT I MYSELF WAS NOT SO WELL-KNOWN, I HAVE BEEN ENCOURAGING OTHERS. SOMEONE WHO PROMOTES OTHERS BECOMES A FIGURE LIKE A GODFATHER. I THINK THIS MUST BE THE REASON.

slapped our hands together in a high five. Come, he said, let's try one last hand to see what luck brings us!

SUDARSHAN FAAKIR, *poet* | His sense of humour is part of his personality. He is a treasurehouse of jokes, he knows thousands. His humour is effortless, as if it runs through his blood and veins. Once I was speaking to him on the phone, and I said, Papaji, I've been thinking – To which he replied, quick as a flash, So you've begun thinking now!

He doesn't celebrate his birthday. Once I called him up to wish him – although it's very difficult to get him on the phone – and I had just started saying – Bhapaji...when he said, Faakir saheb, thank you very much. And I hadn't even wished him! I asked, Thank you for what? And he replied, For that which is in your mind but hasn't reached your tongue as yet!

JEHANGIR CHOWDHURI, *son-in-law and cinematographer* | He has a very earthy sense of humour, and I think it comes from his zest for life. He's the sort of person who, while going in his car, can stop to buy a packet of chana and relish it like it's the best meal he's had in his life. And it's very infectious, this joy for life. People around him react to this, his audiences too, and it's not at all put on, it's so genuine that you can't help but respond to it.

But there's another aspect to this humour which people don't realise. He hides his sorrow behind it, and it's a great tool for him to get through life. He does not like to see people around him in pain or being sad, it's against his nature, I suppose.

NIDA FAZLI, *poet* | Jagjit's voice has a strange magic. It is layered. We feel that he sings with a smile, but within the words he is weeping and making us weep, this is his amazing art.

I feel that the ultimate in art is reached when you can simultaneously make your audience laugh and cry. This union of tears and laughter is what I consider a gift from God, and Jagjit's voice is a gift from God.

The beauty of his voice is that it reflects the totality of the artiste himself and his many forms, the Jagjit Singh behind the surface Jagjit Singh. Each artiste has 10-20 other artistes hidden within him. People know the public Jagjit Singh of the stage, but they don't comprehend that the effectiveness of this voice, the immediacy of this voice, is backed by different aspects of Jagjit Singh-his inner sensitivity – the reflection of the pain he hears, of those who are hungry or sick or sorrowful. All these are part of a totality.

This is the magic of Jagjit Singh's voice: it has the sweetness of the mother, the beauty of a father's love, the tenderness of a deep relationship and is

like a soothing ointment upon one's wounds. It comes to you, and without taking anything, goes away.

SUDARSHAN FAAKIR, *poet* | I have named Jagjit Singh "Maseeha-e-ghazal" – the Saviour of the ghazal – a name which he objects to. Because, as he says, the ghazal existed before me and continues to flourish, so how am I its saviour? My point of view is that a saviour is not just he who breathes life into corpses but also he who, when people are close to death, revitalises them with fresh life. Think – what was the condition of ghazal in 1976? In my opinion, like a nightingale shut in a cage, whose wings had almost fallen off, whose soaring ability to fly had been snatched from it...

At that time, who was there to save that nightingale? Who gave it it the ability to fly, a new colour, a new form, new embellishments, a new turn, a new popularity that increased its listeners from thousands to tens of millions of people, who was that artiste? That was Jagjit Singh. And I'll say it again, that was Jagjit Singh.

Jagjit Singh may object to this and deny it a hundred thousand times, but I will still call him "Maseeha-e-ghazal". Jagjit Singh did not allow the stricken ghazal to fall, to die; for this its lovers should be indebted to him.

JAGJIT SINGH | I don't know why people call me the Godfather of the ghazal! I'm quite surprised!

I must tell you that ghazal and ghazal gayaki are two different things. Ghazal is a form of Urdu poetry, it's nothing to do with music. But when you set it to a composition and sing it, that's ghazal gayaki. Now this gayaki will vary from artiste to artiste. If I sing a ghazal whose music has been composed by someone else, then it's not my gayaki, my style, it's his.

I have studied all the styles. First I used to sing the Talat Mehmood ghazals. Then Mehdi Hasan. I liked the tunes and words.

By this reckoning, ghazal has many godfathers, each singer with an individual style could be called a godfather. I had my own style. I selected the ghazals to sing, I recorded with modern sounds and instruments. That could be one reason, because my style is unique. You'll hear in my ghazals a sophisticated and disciplined form, like a well-dressed person. And even this, I would say, is not originally mine; it comes from the form of the film music of the 50s. The film people abandoned that form. I took it, polished it, and that became my style. But I still can't understand why I'm called a godfather!

I think there is another reason for this. People find it strange that, being a ghazal singer myself, I'm helping other ghazal singers. From the time that I myself was not so well-known, I have been encouraging others. Someone who promotes others becomes a figure like a godfather. I think this must be the reason.

CHITRA SINGH, *wife* | There's one more reason. Normally an artiste comes on the scene, rises to his peak and slowly dies out. Then he's no longer in the limelight.

But here you have an artiste – yes, it took him time to create his place, but once he created it, he remained there. No one can shake him from his position, on the contrary, he has achieved new heights. I think that's also godfatherly, he's been reigning for the last 25 years.

JAGJIT SINGH | How busy I remain now, that's upto me. If I want, I can be busy every single day; if I want, I don't have to sing. I don't want to be busy every day, it puts an end to creativity, also I don't want to tax myself. Now I'm taking it easy.

Sometimes I feel that time is running out and there's so much more left to be done. At other times I feel, well, I've already done so much, where's the need to do more, that's enough. And then again you feel whatever you've done, you can do something better, let's try for that. Such mixed feelings keep going through my mind.

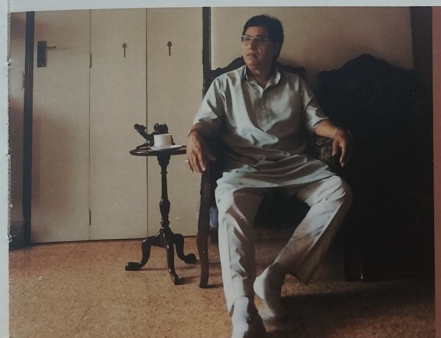
SANJEEV KOHLI, *son of music director, the late Madan Mohan; ex-HMV* | He started the ghazal wave. Before he came in, ghazals were heard only in small mehfils and the singers were largely people like Begum Akhtar. Where was the ghazal album before that? Ghazals were recorded only by either a Begum Akhtar, a non-film singer, on the one extreme, or, on the other, by film singers. Rafi saheb did two albums, Talat Mehmood did three; but they were not ghazal singers, they were film voices doing non-film music. That was the music business then. Eight, nine voices did everything: film, ghazal, bhajan. There was nothing beyond that.

But Jagjit Singh came and changed not only ghazal but all of non-film music: in fact, you could say that he created non-film music. He opened up the ghazal to a whole new audience, he made the common man's drawing room a darbar. He brought his beloved ghazal out of the confines of the silver screen and aristocratic mehfils into the warmth of the middle class home.

I don't even need to think of why he is the Godfather of Ghazal. Whether in commercial success or performance, he is singular in the genre. Everywhere else, you have dualities of artistes – Lataji and Ashaji, Pandit Ravi Shankar and Ustad Vilayat Khan, Pandit Bhimsen Joshi and Pandit Jasraj. But here, apart from Jagjitji, who else is there?

The Jagjit Singh tidal wave changed forever the destinies of both singer and form. The Jagjit Singh wave made the recording companies realise the commercial potential of his style of music and this in turn created a new generation of young ghazal singers, many of them discoveries of Jagjit Singh himself. The Jagjit Singh wave brought recognition to erstwhile unacknowledged poets, many of whom benefited even commercially through the success of his albums. The Jagjit Singh wave made the ghazal concert a must for a variety of occasions. The Jagjit Singh wave benefited a new breed of artistes, musicians, sound engineers, studios: in fact, he developed a new industry, the ghazal industry.

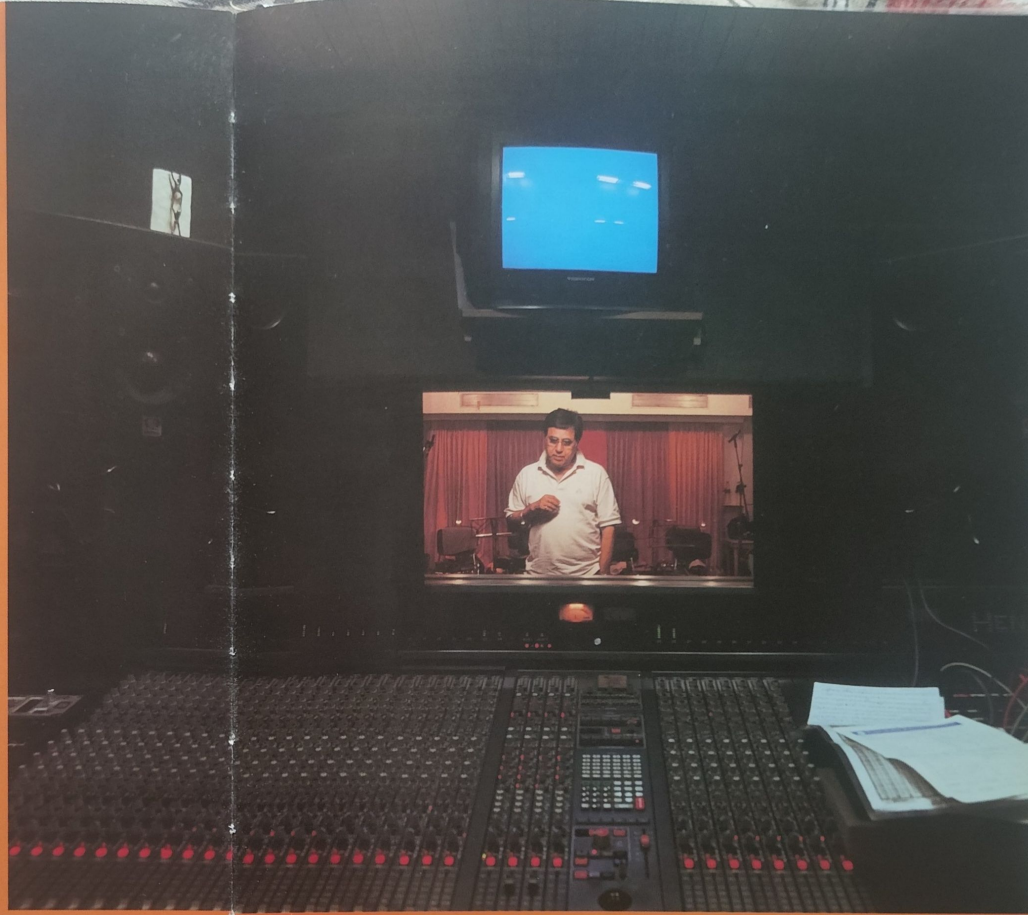
Is it any wonder, then, that Jagjit Singh is referred to as the Godfather of the modern ghazal?



JAGJIT SINGH | I DON'T KNOW WHY PEOPLE CALL ME THE GODFATHER OF THE GHAZAL! I'M QUITE SURPRISED!

SANJEEV KOHLI, *son of music director, the late Madan Mohan; ex-HMV*

JAGJIT SINGH CAME AND CHANGED NOT ONLY GHAZAL BUT ALL OF NON-FILM MUSIC: IN FACT, YOU COULD SAY THAT HE CREATED NON-FILM MUSIC. HE OPENED UP THE GHAZAL TO A WHOLE NEW AUDIENCE, HE MADE THE COMMON MAN'S DRAWING ROOM A DARBAR. HE BROUGHT HIS BELOVED GHAZAL OUT OF THE CONFINES OF THE SILVER SCREEN AND ARISTOCRATIC MEHFILS INTO THE WARMTH OF THE MIDDLE CLASS HOME.



GIVING TO OTHERS

PREM TIWARI, *friend* | In this industry very few people are trusting or giving; he is the rare exception. I heard from a friend – mind you, he himself will never speak of these things – that at a recent concert, a handicapped child presented him with a gift during the intermission. Immediately he announced that the evening's collection would be presented to the cause of the handicapped. This, in an era where no one does anything even for his own father.

This impulse is inborn. Don't think it comes only from the aftermath of Baboo's death. That's not the case with him. I think it comes from the time he was born.

JAGJIT SINGH | This is samskara. I've seen it with my father. My father's nature was this, that no one left the house empty. We came from a family lower than middle class, with many children in the house. Sometimes he couldn't afford the help he gave others, like our relatives. He was not a rich man, yet he gave, and never expected to get it back. When that quality is within you then nothing can stop it. If it's not there you can't make it come.

It is my upbringing. Your left hand should not know what your right hand is doing...God has given me this materialistic world which I never deserved, given me so that I can share. My principle is that ventilation can only happen when the air circulates freely, flows freely, only when the air goes out then more can come in.

VANITA MALHOTRA, *formerly of CRY, Child Relief and You* | I met Jagjit Singh in 1994. We wanted to do an event to raise funds for CRY. At first we had thought in terms of a performance, but then he came up himself with this idea. He said, I want to do something for CRY which is different, concrete, so I'd like to make an album for you from the sale of which you will get the royalties. I will sing some songs only for this album, for the children. It seems he had already had thought over something like this because he said, HMV will do it for me, they're good friends of mine, I will talk to them. And he told us that he wanted to give us two lakh rupees straightaway.

We were quite bowled over! He added, There will be no cost to you. I will have a performance where I will release this album and I will give you the two lakhs on the stage. You will have to do nothing, except to be present. And of course he wanted us to talk about CRY on that occasion – if we wanted to do a little presentation, he was open to all that.

Of course, we were very happy. He said, Think about it, discuss it. I'll also think about the kind of songs I'm going to sing. We said, We have nothing to discuss, we are absolutely with you, please go ahead.

What I'm trying to tell you is that this was entirely his idea. This is something from the heart which he wanted to do for children because, he said, I have a feeling for children. And I feel, quite honestly, this was soon after his son's death and I think it came from there.

It was a very beautifully done occasion. The stage was decorated with flowers. During the interval Jagjit Singh gave the two lakhs cheque to CRY. The album "Cry for CRY" was released and went on sale in the auditorium. We also sold CRY merchandise, like cards, and gave out literature on our work to those who attended.

Ever since we have been getting royalties from the sale of that album, and between 1994 until 2000 (when I moved from Bombay) we got about seven lakh rupees from that. That's a lot of money!

Some time later, we again felt we should have a performance with Jagjit Singh, so I rang him up. His response was positive, but he said, First find a sponsor. From this stage, he started charging us for the performance, it was not free, though we did not pay his full rate. He felt that he's done his bit, the one big thing he did for us. I'll charge you less, he said, but you must get a sponsor.

I noticed that he never wanted to put up a show unless he was sure that CRY was going to make good money from it. He used to ask, What kind of sponsors will you get; and come forward with all sorts of practical ideas. Who's giving you the tickets, he'd ask if it was an outstation concert, is somebody giving you hotel rooms? Or transportation? Only when we came back with these answers would he agree to the concert, Alright, he'd say, we'll have the show. So how much will CRY make – and he'd sit and do the calculations himself and tell us, This is what you'll make. Our homework was all done by him! I used to feel he's so concerned about us, where will we get a partner like him? That's how the sponsorship idea started for us. People were always receptive for a Jagjit Singh show and ready to give.

We're really grateful to Jagjit Singh for all that he has done for us. He's helped us in a big way. Each suggestion came from him, he knew we were not so well versed in knowing what to do and how to do it, so he guided us.

When the outside world sees that we have friends like Jagjit Singh, among known personalities, it has an effect. They feel, this cause must be genuine, it must be good. For a charity, that's very, very important, to have that acknowledged credibility. To have a figure like Jagjit Singh, a genuine honest figure, a good man, stand for us, that adds to our image.

JAGJIT SINGH | After Baboo's death, I started sharing my income from albums and concerts with charities and organisations. I did an album, "Cry for CRY", where the royalties go to CRY; I did "Ma" for the Aurobindo Ashram, I did "Love is Blind" for the National Association of the Blind. I had done this kind of thing before too, but now it was a deliberate and considered act on my part.

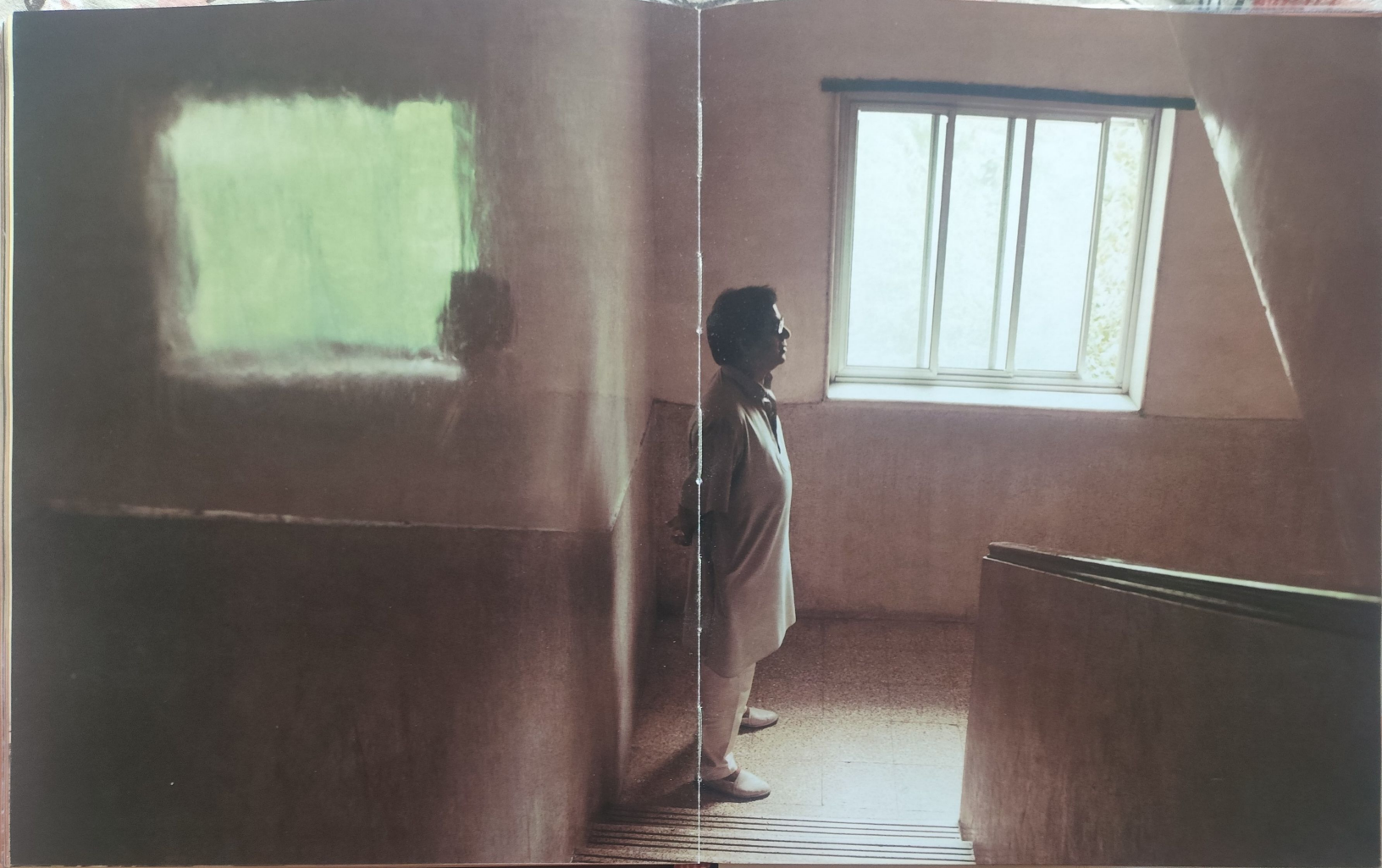
I don't know what I was expecting. To be honest, you don't do anything without expectation. If I gave to charity I expected a return. I gave to Lilavati Hospital so that a ward could be named after him. It is the same with his old school, I had a library built and it is called the Vivek Singh Memorial Library. I made a donation to the Corporation, they have named the lane here after him.

But real charity is when you do something and forget about it; it is that where one hand doesn't know what the other is doing. One does these things hoping for relief or peace or to see someone happy.

KARTAR SINGH, *younger brother* | Father was a very large-hearted man. Whoever came around mealtime, be he friend or family or acquaintance, could not leave until he had eaten with us. To say No was not in his nature.

Veerji has the same large-heartedness, he has got it from our father. He cannot say No to anyone. Knock on his door and ask – he'll give; he has helped people he does not even know, this is his nature.

CHITRA SINGH, *wife* | Whoever comes to Jagjitji for help of any kind never goes away empty-handed, no one is turned away. He never pauses to think whether the person is deserving or not. *Har insaan apna karam ka khata hai*, he says, each of us gets only that which he has earned through his karma. Apart from his immediate family, he has numerous dependents whom he supports and protects. I think that he is extremely blessed to be able to do this.



SAMVEDNA, 2002 AND THE HINDI LANGUAGE

JAGJIT SINGH | My interest is in how to promote Hindi. Sometimes I think: this is a strange country we live in! Nobody's owning the national language, not in the south, not in the east. There should be one language that we all share, at least understand if not speak. That can only happen if Hindi is popular. Why is English an international language today? Because it's widely spoken, it's accepted everywhere. Similarly in India we should have a language that is spoken and understood from one corner to another. Urdu is like spoken Hindi, its construction is like that of Hindi, only the words can be different. If I say "lafz" it's Urdu. If I say "shabd" it's Hindi. The rest is so akin, you can't separate them. I have an interest in making Hindi literature popular. Now I'm in a position where people accept my work, they look forward to what I will do next, so keeping all these in mind, I have planned this.

Of course, it is not as if I haven't sung Hindi before. I sang the lyrics of Indeevar, "Hothhon se chhu lo tum, mera geet amar kar do" and that became very popular. So much so that there is scarcely a concert where I am not asked to sing it. But that was for a film, and film has its own promotion, so I can't take the credit for that. Then I sang a poem of Pt. Vinod Sharma's, "Bujh gaye tapte hue din ki..." but it was not so popular, and my enthusiasm for Hindi waned.

But poetry is very rich in Hindi, think of Mahadevi Verma, Harivanshrai Bachhan: though my interest is not in a particular poet but in the language as a whole, Hindi as the national language.

I got an opportunity with "Samvedna", which I felt was a good beginning for Hindi lovers. And now I really want to do more in Hindi, select poems that are singable, which can be rendered as geet.

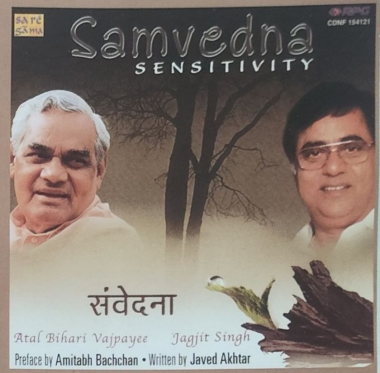
"Samvedna" is the album based on poetry by Atal Bihari Vajpayee; it was not easy poetry to compose for, and I had to adjust the metre in places. The genesis of the album is that a couple of years ago, I did another album of his poems called "Nayi Dishaae", in which I composed two songs, including "Kya khoya, kya paaya" and Prem Gupta did the rest. That album came...and went. It had no great impact. Now the Goenkas (of RPG and the Saregama label) entered the picture. I don't know who approached whom, or where the idea originated, but I got the proposal for another album of poems by the Prime Minister, they are very keen, I was told. So I said, Let me see "Meri Ekyavan Kavitayen" which is the volume of his poetry, let me see what is not sung, what is singable. So I searched and selected seven-eight poems. Six we recorded. One I didn't like, so it was replaced by "Kya khoya, kya paaya" from the original "Nayi Dishaae", exactly as it was, we didn't re-record that. That is my favourite, and a music video was made of it. Now it has become so popular that I get requests for it on the stage.

Then I thought, six songs are not enough for an album, I needed some more. I asked for an appointment with Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee. I wanted to understand the context of his poems, and also discuss certain words with him. Why did you write certain poems, I asked him, and where? How did the idea come? Then Mr. Vajpayee told me the background of some of them. During the Emergency, he said, I was ill in a hospital in Delhi. In the mornings at around 4 o'clock I would be woken up by the heartrending sound of crying. I asked the hospital staff, Whose cries are these so early in the morning? and they replied, Those who die here at night, their bodies are given to their relatives early in the morning. When they see the remains of their loved ones, they burst into anguished cries of loss. After that I wrote the poem, "Door kahin koi rota hai".

This poem is one of the tracks featured on "Samvedna", which became quite successful. This is also the reason I'm thinking of Hindi, it sells, and there is a large Hindi belt across the north.

DEEPAK PANDIT, *musician and arranger* | Uncle has reposed so much trust in me. He gave me the assignment of arranging the music on two albums, "Samvedna" and "Forget Me Not".

In "Samvedna", there's a poem, "Door kahin koi rota hai". He composed the melody – he took hardly 20 minutes to do the basic tune – and I did the dubbing of the flute interlude while he was not present in the studio. Later, when he came in and heard it, he said to me: Deepak, this flute piece is so moving, it's given me goose bumps. And his eyes filled as he said: *This* is real music, *this* is called music.



At the album's launch in Delhi, the hall was full of eminent people, the Prime Minister, Pandit Ravi Shankar, and notables of the film world like Yash Chopra and Shah Rukh Khan. In that full assembly, and in the middle of his concert, he announced: The music for the album whose songs I'm singing has been arranged by Deepak Pandit, who is on the stage with me. When I heard his arrangements in the studio, I was deeply moved – so I'll request all of you to give him your blessings.

Impossible to express how I felt. His trust, those words are the biggest rewards I could have, to receive this appreciation from a musician so complete in himself. I don't need medals or public awards, his words are more than enough for me.

JAGJIT SINGH | SOMETIMES I FEEL THAT TIME IS RUNNING OUT AND THERE'S SO MUCH MORE LEFT TO BE DONE.
AT OTHER TIMES I FEEL, WELL, I'VE ALREADY DONE SO MUCH, WHERE'S THE NEED TO DO MORE, THAT'S ENOUGH.
AND THEN AGAIN YOU FEEL WHATEVER YOU'VE DONE, YOU CAN DO SOMETHING BETTER, LET'S TRY FOR THAT. SUCH MIXED FEELINGS KEEP GOING THROUGH MY MIND.

bandish
Set musical composition

bhajan
Devotional song

bhakti
Prayerful devotion

bol banana
Musical elaboration typical of thumri which brings out poetic nuances through a musical play of words

bol-pradaan
Description of any form of music where the lyrics are given prominence

chhand
Metre, Urdu name, "beher"

dadra
A form of musical expression, also the name of a lively percussive cycle of six beats

dhrupad
The oldest and most austere of the main forms of Hindustani classical music, said to be derived from the Sama Veda

gayaki
Style of singing

geet
Song

ghazal
Poetic form comprising couplets bound to a specific metre and rhyming rules; each couplet could have a different thought

keherwa
Taal or percussive cycle of eight beats

khayal
Lit. "imagination", one of the main forms of Hindustani classical music

laya
Rhythm, tempo

matla
Rhyming opening couplet of the ghazal

mehfil
Musical gathering or soiree

misra
One line of a couplet

mukhda
The first phrase of the vocal exposition, also the cadence phrase

mushaira
Soiree of poets

nazm
Form of poetry which carries a single theme from start to finish

palta
Permutation and combination of notes in ascending and descending order

qafiya
Rhyme word of the ghazal, which occurs towards, but before, the end of the line.
The rhyme has to be repeated in the second line of all the verses that follow

rabab
Plucked string instrument

Rabindra Sangeet
Poems of Rabindranath Tagore set to music.

radeef
Two or three words that occur at the very end of the verse's first line; this rhyme pattern has to be repeated in the second line of all the verses that follow.

raga
A melodic scale or mode, based on seven notes of which at least five should be used.

ragamala
Lit. "garland of ragas" in which different ragas are performed within the same musical piece.

riyaz
Musician's daily practise

samskaras
Social and ritual usage and values based on tradition

shabad
Verse/s from the Guru Granth Saheb

shringar
Romantic or erotic mood

taal
Cyclical percussive beat

taan
Intricate note patterns, can be sung or performed in varying tempos

thumri
Form of Hindustani music, usually vocal, which lays emphasis on bhav or emotion, especially on shringar or the romantic aspect

JAGJIT & CHITRA SINGH SELECT DISCOGRAPHY

ALBUMS	MUSIC COMPANY
1967-79	
E.P. Jagjit Singh / Suresh Rajvanshi	HMV
E.P. Rajendra Mehta / composed by Jagjit Singh	HMV
E.P. Jagjit - Chitra	HMV
Super Seven - Jagjit-Chitra	HMV
E.P. Jagjit Singh - Patta Patta Butta Butta Mujhe De Rehe Ab To Ghabra Ke Dil Me Tum Ho	
E.P. Another E.P. Dil Ko Kya Ho Gaya Phir Kucch Is Dil Ki Bekarari Daastaane-Ghame-Dil Unko	HMV
The Unforgettables	HMV
Birha-da-Sultan	HMV
Come Alive	HMV
Jagjit Singh presents Talat Aziz	HMV
Live at Wembley	HMV
1980s	
Talent of the 80's - 1. Ghanshyam Vaswani 2. Vinod Sehgal 3. Seema Sehgal 4. Sumita Chakravarty 5. Junaid Akhtar 6. Ashok Khosla	Polydor
Milestone	HMV
Main Aur Meri Tanhai	Universal
Live at the Royal Albert Hall	HMV
The Latest	HMV
Esctasies	HMV
Krishna	BMG Crescendo
Echoes	HMV
A Sound Affair	HMV
Beyond Times	HMV
Live in Concert	HMV
Passions	HMV

ALBUMS	MUSIC COMPANY
Mirza Ghalib	HMV
1990s	
Someone Somewhere	HMV
Hope	HMV
Kahkashan	HMV
Man Jite Jagjit	HMV
Sajda Volumes I & II	HMV
In Search	Venus
Face to Face	Magna Sound
Maa	HMV
Desires	Weston
Insight	Weston
Cry for Cry	HMV
Visions	Tips
Mirage	HMV
Unique	Tips
Love is blind	Venus
Hey Ram	HMV
Silsilay	HMV
Hare Krishna	HMV
Marasim	Sony
Saanwara	HMV
Saher	T-Series
Nai Dishaee	HMV
2000s	
Kirtan	HMV
Radhe Krishna Radhe Shyam	T-Series
OM	HMV
Aaina	Universal
Different Strokes	HMV
Jai Radha Madhav	HMV
Life Story	Universal
Soz	HMV
Samvedna	HMV
Forget me Not	T-Series

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